

# United Nations puts CU on peace course

Nandini Guha  
Kolkata, December 20

THE UNITED Nations, ready to groom peacemakers in Asia, has shortlisted Calcutta University as a launch pad for its courses on conflict management and peace studies.

A delegation from the UN-backed University of Peace is in the city to check out the feasibility of the programme. The team met Higher Education Minister Satyasadhan Chakraborty on Friday with the proposal to help CU and few other Asian universities build this academic peace-keeping force across the globe.

The course, which will start in a year, will initially be part of the peace study stream being taught at the CU and later developed into a full-fledged under-

graduate and postgraduate course.

The minister has reportedly approved of the initiative and assured financial and infra-structure support to the project. The MPhil course on peace studies will be revamped with the University of Peace pitching in with faculty and study materials.

The team also met potential students and course administrators and will scout for other varieties in India where these courses can be developed. The University of Peace was born in 1980 at the behest of the UN General Assembly and was based in Costa Rica before moving to the US.

Conflict management is a much sought after subject nowadays especially among future

## OLIVE BRANCH

- Course to start in a year as part of existing CU peace studies at MPhil-level
- CU with help of University of Peace to offer MA in peace studies in two years
- CU to be one of seven varsities to tie-up with the UN-backed academic institution
- Course on conflict management first in the eastern region

administrators. Laying the grounds for peace in zones of conflict is the prime job for them.

"We do not usually give prominence to the issue of conflict prevention. India needs to do that because of the serious problems it's facing vis-à-vis its neighbours: communal violence, sharing of water, environment issues," Narinder Kakar, the director of the New York unit of the university, told the Hindustan Times. "We can help build India's future administrators and policy-makers."

Kakar did not spill the beans on the peacekeeping syllabi but hinted that conflict management, role of the media and women's peace studies would be incorporated in the post-graduate and MPhil curricula. The University of Peace would facilitate course building by training faculty by organising teacher-exchange programmes.

The administrative faculty will have full liberty in shaping the course as per local parameters with the partner university not allowed to impose any strictures.

"The delegation seemed to like what they saw at the Calcutta University," said Suranjan Das, pro-VC (academic) of the Calcutta University. "They met at least 70 to 80 students and were enthused. At least some of them may find jobs with the UN."

The delegation has already visited universities based in New Delhi such as Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Ignou with the intention of building a network of universities across Asia that would help promote conflict-prevention.

*J. Education Culture*

## A SIGNIFICANT STEP

*19.10 21/12*

THE GRANT OF Presidential assent for the 93rd Constitutional Amendment that makes free and compulsory primary education a Fundamental Right for all children marks a significant step in the country's aim to achieve 'Education for All'. The Bill may have taken five years to become law for many reasons. It may suffer many a lacuna. But the fact is the amendment holds out a Constitutional guarantee for providing free education up to high school to all its 190 million young and growing minds between 6 and 14. More significantly, the new law will seek to bring into the educational mainstream 35 million boys and girls who are yet to be covered by formal schooling systems.

The Amendment to Article 21 of the Constitution says that the "Government shall provide free and compulsory education to all children from the age of six to 14 in such a manner as the State may by law determine..." No longer is the promise of achieving universal primary education an unenforceable Constitutional Directive. Now there is scope for judicial intervention to provide educational infrastructure to all Indian children up to the high school level. It also seeks to compel parents to send their children to school by including it as a Fundamental Duty (Article 51 A); and amends Article 45 of the Constitution to make the state "endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete six years of age". The Minister for Human Resource Development, Murli Manohar Joshi, has rightly called the passing of the Bill in the Lok Sabha the "dawn of the second Revolution in the Chapter of Citizens Rights" and announced that laws will also be made to operationalise the Fundamental Right.

Laudable the new law might be. But the Constitutional amendment alone may not be able to address the larger social questions and the Preamble promises of providing social, economic and political justice for all. For instance, the law

does not define the word "free". Today even the poorest of parents spend money to buy books, uniforms and pay examination fees for their children. The role of private educators in making primary education free and compulsory also remains undefined. The Opposition parties have already raised in Parliament the fact that no funds were allotted in this year's budget to operationalise the law. But then, the Government can always point to the funds it has allotted under the 'Education for All movement' as its financial commitment. While the amendment makes it a Fundamental Duty for every parent to send his or her wards to school, there are genuine apprehensions that those who fail to do it may face prosecution. Fears about the random use of the provision against the poor and the depressed are not unfounded. Early childhood care and education is only a Directive Principle and not a Fundamental Right — meaning the educational growth of children from 0-6 years is not guaranteed.

Thus the Amendment alone is not enough. Every State, especially those with poor literacy and dropout records, needs incentives to frame laws to extend the Constitutional guarantee and provide free, compulsory, quality, equitable school and early childhood care and education up to the higher secondary level. Gender injustice and adult illiteracy are problems that need legal instrumentalities for lasting solutions. The States have no choice but to take monumental efforts for universalising enrolment and retaining each student in school, without dropping out, till the age of 14. Otherwise, India's economic growth will face a frightful threat from a large seething mass of young people who remain illiterate, specifically due to lack of state effort. This spectre should goad administrators and lawmakers into taking the Education for All campaign to its highest possible pitch. Only then can the one billion population of India match the demands of a knowledge-powered 21st century.

# Courts & minority education — II

By V.R. Krishna Iyer

SOMETIMES FAULTLESS logic may falter on fundamentals and that, I suspect, has partially vitiated the Court's jarring slant towards unaided institutions. The elite in India, since 1991, is obsessed with privatisation and globalisation in an almost totalitarian fashion. This bias is apparent in the unconcealed observation of the Kirpal judgment. I quote: "Private education is one of the most dynamic and fastest growing segments of post-secondary education at the turn of the twenty-first century. A combination of unprecedented demand for access to higher education and the inability or unwillingness of the Government to provide the necessary support has brought private higher education to the forefront. Private institutions, with a long history in many countries, are expanding in scope and number and are becoming increasingly important in parts of the world that relied almost entirely on the public sector."

Look at the ideological shift of the Court: "Not only has demand overwhelmed the ability of the Governments to provide education, there has also been a significant change in the way that higher education is perceived. The idea of an academic degree as a 'private good' that benefits the individual rather than a 'public good' for society is now widely accepted. The logic of today's economics and an ideology of privatisation have contributed to the resurgence of private higher education, and the establishing of private institutions where none or very few existed before." (Paras 48 and 49)

Commercialisation of education is the *bete noire* in a socialist democratic republic that India is under its great Preamble. Fortunately, the Court has provided for conditions of transparency and merit. The Court happily frowns upon preference being shown to less meritorious but more influential applicants. Why? Because, "excellence in professional education would require that greater emphasis be laid on the merit of a student seeking admission and appropriate regulations for this purpose may be made..." This lovely note notwithstanding, the privatisation predilection is an ideological

deviation. The Court takes the view that in the case of unaided private schools maximum autonomy has to be with the management including the fees to be charged. The Court holds a brief in favour of private schools although it is a notorious racket that unaided private schools and colleges, with rare exceptions, are a law unto themselves and a trade in the matter of fees, admission, administration and the like flourishes.

"At the school level, it is not possible to grant admissions on the basis of merit. It is no secret that the

measure of control. But the Court is inclined to overlook the rampant rage regarding the fee levy and discriminatory dimensions of 'free to loot' unaided bodies. Regulation becomes justified not because state grant is given but because public education is a matter of serious social concern, that too, in a socialistic democratic republic. The term capitation fee is more a clever formality because these extra-levies have different terminology to outwit judicial vocabulary. The prescription of transparency and adequate attention to merit in the matter of admission to unaided colleges is more a placebo than an effective panacea.

While overruling Unnikrishnan the court salves its conscience by holding, "however, the principle that there should not be capitation fee or profit theory is correct". How naive to uphold "reasonable surplus to meet cost of expansion and augmentation of facility". The fluid phraseology facilitates exploitation without compunction as if this generation of students must fund future development about which there is no plan, no record, no restraint nor no definite direction, no verification of viability.

There is no gainsaying the fact that social justice and equal opportunity for educational excellence at all levels have gone by default. Of course, globalisation, liberalisation, privatisation and marketisation have captured the Court's notice and the Preamble to the Constitution is de facto judicially jettisoned.

While Unnikrishnan has been extinguished in social philosophy, pragmatic operation and 50 per cent for admission of non-minority students, there is no firm, fool-proof indication, barring vague generalisations, as to what should be a just proportion of non-minority admission. The Court has the last word, but the common people should not have the least word. The classroom, it has been said, shapes the destiny of the nation and education is too serious a matter to be left only to the robed brethren. Our crimson Constitution has a value vision to blink at which is to miss its social mission.

(Concluded)

*Social justice and equal opportunity for educational excellence at all levels have gone by default.*

examination results at all levels of unaided private schools, notwithstanding the stringent regulations of the governmental authorities, are far superior to the results of the government-maintained schools. There is no compulsion on students to attend private schools. The rush for admission is occasioned by the standards maintained in such schools, and recognition of the fact that state-run schools do not provide the same standards of education. The state says that it has no funds to establish institutions at the same level of excellence as private schools, it disables those schools from affording the best facilities because of a lack of funds. If this lowering of standards from excellence to a level of mediocrity is to be avoided, the state has to provide the difference which, therefore, brings us back in a vicious circle to the original problem, viz., the lack of state funds. The solution would appear to lie in the states not using their scanty resources to prop up institutions that are able to otherwise maintain themselves out of the fees charged, but in improving the facilities and infrastructure of state-run schools and in subsidising the fees payable by the students there. It is in the interest of the general public that more good quality schools are established; autonomy and non-regulation of the school administration in the right of appointment, admis-

institutions is to succumb to unconstitutional prejudice when the winds of privatisation are blowing with propaganda power. My hunch is that while Justice Jeevan Reddy in Unnikrishnan's case castigates commercialisation of education, Justice Kirpal in the T.M.A. Pai case, reverses the process and advocates the cause of the private sector. Profiteering, no. Profit-making, yes. "This partition do their bounds divide."

A reasonable surplus for future expansion is, in the apex court diction, permissible profit but not profiteering. So students are to subsidise the educational charity out of their poverty. Founders, with philanthropic motivation and eleemosynary reputation must rely on social sources, donative channels and business barons for handsome grants, not fleece the poor parents who borrow for their child's future nor squeeze young students with educational hunger and meritorious talent. The vast poor have no claim to judicial compassion. That is privatisation and market methodology exciting for the affluent but the brilliant indigents are priced out of the educational bazaar!

Alas, unaided minority schools from the L.K.G, U.K.G and the very first standard have become a ubiquitous business with heavy capitation fees under various dubious disguises. Merit is measured by money and so public morality requires some

17 DEC 2002

# Walkout in NCERT meet over textbook row

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 16. The Education Ministers of Congress and Left-ruled States walked out of the 39th Annual General Meeting of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) here today over the textbook issue, even as the Union Human Resource Development Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, dismissed it as a frustrated Opposition's attempt to flog a dead horse.

Evidently buoyed by the Gujarat election results and the Supreme Court judgment which went in favour of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, Dr. Joshi described today's walkout as a "political statement" by an Opposition that had been shown the door in Gujarat, Assam and Rajasthan.

While a walkout by Opposition-ruled States was anticipated from the moment the AGM began, the Education

Ministers of Congress and Left-run States raised the textbook controversy two hours into the meeting. Their demands include reconstitution of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), deferring the introduction of the controversial textbooks, review of the textbooks by an independent panel and reintroduction of the old books till the expert group submits its report.

With the memorandum being "rejected" by others present, the signatories to the statement walked out of the meeting protesting against the way in which cooperative federalism had been given the go-by during the entire process of curriculum revision.

Since most of these States have already decided not to introduce the NCERT textbooks in their schools, the Ministers said they would either retain the old books or bring out a new set on their own. As for Jammu and Kashmir, its Minister, Harsh Dev Singh, decided to remain in the meeting to present the State's case, vis-à-vis, infrastructure

and later told the media that the NCERT textbooks would be introduced in the State with modifications "wherever necessary". "I insisted that J&K — which finds little mention in the social science text — cannot be ignored."

"These books, which are full of inaccuracies, are unacceptable to us," said the West Bengal Education Minister, Kanti Biswas, conceding that some of the History books brought out by his State too contained errors. "We have set up a committee of historians to examine them and will accept their suggestions."

In particular, the Opposition-ruled States are pressing for the reconstitution of CABE. However, the Minister later said the Supreme Court judgment — which the Opposition Ministers were quoting — had only advised the Centre to convene a meeting of CABE, and there was no directive to this effect from the apex court.

17 DEC 2002

# President's nod for Education Bill

By Our Special Correspondent

HD-13  
16/12

**CHENNAI, DEC. 15.** The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, has given his assent for the Constitution 93rd Amendment Bill, which makes elementary education a fundamental right. I have given my assent to make education compulsory till class nine, day before yesterday," Dr. Kalam, told a gathering of women, who are part of self-help groups (SHG) in Kancheepuram district today.

The Bill mandates free and compulsory education for all children in the 6-14 age group. It had undergone an unusually long and complicated process since July 1997, before it got the Presidential assent, the last of the formalities required for a Bill to become law. Dr. Kalam mentioned his assent of the Bill at the Alandur Municipality headquarters, where he was interacting with SHG women on basic issues of village development.

He reminded them that they had a crucial role to play in ensuring economic and social well-being of their communities.

Dr. Kalam, who outlined the need to root out drug abuse, alcoholism and discrimination against the girl child in society to ensure that communities progressed, made the 99 women promise to abide by what he called Alandur declaration.

He handed over a copy of the declaration to the Collector, K. Rajaraman, and asked him to supply the gathered women with copies of the declaration.

THE HINDI

16 DEC 2002

# Courts & minority education — I

By V. R. Krishna Iyer

110-10  
16/12

**N**O JUDGE writes on a wholly clean slate. Precedents persuade the Supreme Court but a larger Bench may overturn a lesser Bench. This is the fate of a recent ruling of the Court where eleven judges sat and, on a crucial point, overruled a smaller Bench. Although the Indian Constitution remains value-constant, the Executive has effectually reversed the social philosophy of the great instrument. Commercialising governance and 'marketising' fundamentals are the *bete noire* of our Socialist Republic and judges are the sentinel on the *qui vive* preserving the paramountcy of the Constitution without further violation or erosion. The socio-economic vision of the Constitution is the lodestar that guides the court in its great hermeneutic task even though, as Cardozo observed long ago, the great tides and currents which engulf the rest of men do not turn aside their course and pass the judges by. It may equally strongly be mentioned that the predilections of the robed brethren do condition their rulings.

The latest pronouncement of the highest court in the TMA Pai Foundation case is no exception to the proposition of subtle psychic bias influencing impalpably the interpretive perspective and subconscious conviction of those called upon to pronounce on contemporary issues. Today, under the powerful impact of globalisation and privatisation, the mentality of the elite class has suffered a commercial conditioning even in jurisprudential understanding.

In that event, the Constitution misses its protective mantle of the judges and this has unconsciously, I suspect, happened partly in the reasoning of the otherwise well-argued 'majority opinion'. A few confusions on fundamentals have marginally marred the verdict. The majority judgment, though only of six, is a ruling of a formidable 11-judge bench which can be reconsidered only by a still larger number, not easy to expect under present condi-

tions. The only course open is to read the closely and correctly reasoned (if I may say so with respect) pronouncement of Justice B. N. Kirpal as Chief Justice of India as to impart a progressive meaning proximate to the Constitution's conscience. What is obvious, but still needs emphasis, is that the two basic

produce the beautiful map of India. Each piece, like a citizen of India, plays an important part in making of the whole. The variations of the colours as well as different shades of the same colour in a map is the result of these small pieces of different shades and colours of marble, but even when one small piece of marble is

have to wait how long one never knows for a final adjudication. For instance, the court poses the question: can the followers of a sect or denomination of a particular religion claim protection under Article 30 (1), although the sect may belong to a religion which is in a majority in that State?

There are other practical questions arising in every State and may crop up even in dialect and denomination. Do they constitute a minority eligible for constitutional protection? Similarly, another issue: when an individual or group belonging to a minority religion or language sets up an educational institution with no religious or linguistic motivation or authorisation, does minority eligibility belong to this category? Again, the court evades and leaves the matter for a 'regular Bench'. Evasion of decision today is invitation for profusion of litigation the next day and paves the way for docket explosion another day. An unaided institution set up for higher education must naturally be subject to state regulation. Why? The Court's voice sounds sublime, though with a dark note at the end:

"We, however, wish to emphasise one point, and that is that in as much as the occupation of education is, in a sense, regarded as charitable, the government can provide regulations that will ensure excellence in education, while forbidding the charging of capitation fee and profiteering by the institution. Since the object of setting up an educational institution is by definition "charitable", it is clear that an educational institution cannot charge such a fee as is not required for the purpose of fulfilling that object. To put it differently, in the establishment of an educational institution, the object should not be to make a profit, in as much as education is essentially charitable in nature. There can, however, be a reasonable revenue surplus, which may be generated by the educational institution for the purpose of development of education and expansion of the institution." (Para 57)

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*Under the powerful impact of globalisation and privatisation, the mentality of the elite class has suffered a commercial conditioning even in jurisprudential understanding.*

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features of the Constitution are secularism and equality. This reiteration has been rightly done by the Supreme Court at a time when secularism is on the cross and equality is on the retreat. It is a happy augury that the highest court has strengthened secular and egalitarian values in the field of education by this restatement. The semantic amplitude of secularism as a concept is also briefly brought out by the Supreme Court.

Says Justice Kirpal in an expansive mood of judicial metaphor and emphatic vividness of expression what I quote: "The one billion population of India consists of six main ethnic groups and fifty-two major tribes; six major religions and 6,400 castes and sub-castes; eighteen major languages and 1,600 minor languages and dialects. The essence of secularism in India can best be depicted if a relief map of India is made in mosaic, where the aforesaid one billion people are the small pieces of marble that go into the making of a map. Each person, whatever his/her language, caste, religion has his/her individual identity, which has to be preserved, so that when pieced together it goes to form a depiction with the different geographical features of India. These small pieces of marble, in the form of human beings, which may individually be dissimilar to each other, when placed together in a systematic manner,

removed, the whole map of India would be scarred, and the beauty would be lost.

"A citizen of India stands in a similar position. The Constitution recognises the differences among the people of India, but it gives equal importance to each of them, their differences notwithstanding, for only then can there be a unified secular nation. Recognising the need for the preservation and retention of different pieces that go into the making of a whole nation, the Constitution, while maintaining, *inter alia*, the basic principle of equality, contains adequate provisions that ensure the preservation of these different pieces.

"The essence of secularism in India is the recognition and preservation of the different types of people, with diverse languages and different beliefs, and placing them together so as to form a whole and united India. Articles 9 and 30 do not more than seek to preserve the differences that exist, and at the same time, unite the people to form one strong nation." (Para 158 to 161)

The real problem with the majority judgment arises primarily regarding unaided educational institutions. Several issues of deep import have been left open for decision by a 'regular Bench'.

The country misses a great opportunity by this disinclination and may

# NCERT in the tangled skein of fact & faith

Ranjeet S Jamwal  
in New Delhi

Dec. 6. — On the 10th anniversary of the Babari Masjid demolition, the NCERT is unwilling to let the subject go.

It has brought out a history textbook which illuminates how Babur built mosques "at places sacred to Hindu tradition". "...While the mosque commissioned at Panipat celebrated Babur's victory over the Lodis, two other mosques were sponsored at places sacred to Hindu tradition. Sambhal was where the 10th and last avatar of Vishnu was to appear at the end of the yuga (era), and Ayodhya was revered as the birthplace of Lord Rama," says the Class X textbook titled *Medieval India*.

The new textbook devotes considerable space to what it calls Babur's "anti-Hindu" actions. In the foreword, the

NCERT director, Mr JS Rajput, states that the textbooks have been prepared adhering strictly to the principle of giving an objective account of historical events. Historians have, however, already questioned its objectivity. Prof Arjun Dev said, "Like the earlier history book, this one also seems to follow the same communal approach which sees religion behind all conflicts".

Most chapters in the book, authored by Meenakshi Jain, relate the direct conflict between Hindu and Muslim religions.

In chapter 15 — *Consolidation of Mughal Rule* — students will read how "Jehangir celebrated his victory over the Rana by hunting on the banks of the sacred tank at Pushkar, near Ajmer, violating local tradition. He had the image of Vishnu in his Varaha incarnation destroyed and thrown into the tank. As the temple was

said to belong to the Rana's uncle, some modern historians attribute political rather than religious motives to this act. Jehangir also built a hunting palace on the banks of the Pushkar tank, thus registering Mughal presence in one of the holiest Hindi *teerthas*."

The book says, "Vishwanath temple at Benaras was similarly destroyed and a mosque erected in its place."

Giving a vivid description of the policy of Mughal rulers, the book points out, "Many temples in Orissa were likewise destroyed. During 1679-80, many old temples were desecrated in Jodhpur and Udaipur. It is said that during Aurangzeb's reign, the Rana of Mewar, fearing for the safety of an idol of Lord Krishna at Mathura, secretly carried it to Nathdwara near his capital Udaipur, where it is worshipped to this day."

# Education bill in budget session

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** HRD minister Murl Manohar Joshi has said that legislation to make the proposed education bill operational for making free and compulsory education a fundamental right for children



M.M. Joshi

will be brought in the budget session of parliament.

Stating that nearly three crore children in the age group of six to 14 were still not going to school, he termed the proposed legislation as "the second revolution in the Chapter of Citizen's Rights" after universal suffrage. He promised that the government would implement the measure sincerely and effectively. "The Centre is in touch with the state governments, the Law Commission and other experts and will try to bring a bill in the budget session," Mr Joshi told reporters here on Thursday.

The Law Commission, he added, had already suggested a draft legislation which had been communicated to the states for their views.

Some of the issues which the proposed legislation would address would include the role of various governments, including

state and local bodies, the role of the private sector and the redressal machinery if the right was violated, he said.

The idea was not to punish a poor man who was not sending his child to school but to encourage him, Mr Joshi said, adding that after adult suffrage, this educational empowerment would lead to economic empowerment.

Mr Joshi said the draft legislation would be discussed with leaders of political parties before its introduction in Parliament. He said efforts would be made to enlist those children not covered by literacy schemes in schools and panchayati raj institutions could play a major role in this task.

Since the implementation of this programme was vested with the state governments, Mr Joshi sought their co-operation to make this initiative a success.

Meanwhile, replying to supplementaries during question hour in the Rajya Sabha, Mr Joshi said a sum of 20 billion dollars would be required in the next eight years for providing primary education to all children in the country by 2010.

"Though it is a difficult task, we are committed to achieve the target of providing primary education to all children," he said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 0 NOV 2002



## Parliament nod for Education Bill

110-13  
By Our Special Correspondent *MS*

**NEW DELHI, NOV. 27.** The Constitution 93rd Amendment Bill to make elementary education a fundamental right today secured the Parliament's nod with the Lok Sabha clearing it, and thereby clearing the technical flaw that had delayed enactment of this legislation for over six months after both the Houses had passed it.

Though the Lok Sabha had passed the Bill a year ago on November 28, it had to be referred back to the Lower House as a year had turned by the time it was sent to the Rajya Sabha for approval, as the 2001 Winter Session of Parliament was brought to an abrupt end by the December 13 terrorist strike.

The year change, therefore, necessitated that the Bill -- this time dated 2002 -- be passed once again by the Lok Sabha.

However with the Rajya Sabha clearing at the end of the Budget session and the Monsoon Session closing sine die, the Bill could be brought up in the Lok Sabha only today.

With this, an endeavour that has been in the making since July 1997 has finally got cleared by

*J. P. Singh*  
Parliament and is well on its way into the law books. With governments changing in quick succession in the latter half of the last decade, the 83rd Amendment Bill which sought to make Elementary Education a Fundamental Right was almost forgotten till the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry resurrected it last year and decided to introduce it afresh as the 93rd Constitution Amendment Bill.

Once the Bill becomes an Act, all the children in the 6 to 14 age group will have the Fundamental Right to free and compulsory education. Also, as per the Bill, "the State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years".

Further, the Bill makes it the fundamental duty of parents and guardians to provide opportunities for education to their children/wards in the 6 to 14 age group. Later, talking to reporters, the Union HRD Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, said the Government had already put in place the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to meet the situation arising out of this legislation which now empowers a child to take the State to court should he/she be denied his/her fundamental right.

## NCERT welcomes debate over textbook

NEW DELHI, NOV. 10. Unfazed by critics crying foul over its new curriculum, the NCERT today welcomed the "debate" generated by its recent textbook on Ancient Indian History saying it was of "expected level".

Expressing satisfaction at the "generally professional nature of remarks made by scholars" about the book, the NCERT director, J.S. Rajput said the "new publication has already made an impact" by attempting to throw more light on the Aryan invasion theory, a media release said here.

"Even Prof. D.N. Jha, an esteemed scholar on ancient India, who has himself authored several books, has accepted that Aryan invasion theory is a matter of academic debate," he said adding previous authors of the book had "shied away" from mentioning the "Indian-origin" theory of Aryans.

The academic debate over the origins of Aryans had been raging for over 100 years, he said and added the chapter ought to be discussed with proper references to sources.

"Most educationists found the manner in which arguable facts were being forced down throats of young students quite objectionable. That is why the council asked scholars commissioned to do the new history books to always mention the sources of information they were including," he said.

Stating that the book had attempted to present both views with due acknowledgement to sources, he said "this is the way history is taught all over the world," the release said.

Mr. Rajput also had some harsh words for the council's critics saying they were "making futile attempts to obfuscate the issues raised.

"It would be preferable if they debate the facts published rather than fight the imagined shadows of political parties," it quoted him as saying. — PTI

11 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2002

## MINORITY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

THE SUPREME COURT appears to have struck a delicate balance in the minority educational institutions case by adopting a position aimed at harmonising constitutionally-sanctioned special minority rights, on the one hand, with the constitutional guarantee of non-discrimination on the other. While upholding the minority community's untrammelled right to establish and administer unaided educational institutions, the Court ruled that those institutions which received state aid could be subject to Government rules and regulations. The 11-judge Constitution Bench, which was hearing a batch of over 200 petitions, has delivered a complex and multifaceted judgment which (as anticipated) has laid down the definitions and redefined the scope of many of the provisions that relate to educational institutions and the manner in which they are set up and governed. The significance and the wide-ranging implications of the case were evident when the Court, at the time of reserving its verdict, had formulated 11 questions for its consideration. These included broad questions such as those about the meaning of the expression "minorities" in the context of Article 30 of the Constitution and also many specific ones which, when read together, had a direct bearing on the manner in which educational institutions are governed. Not every one of the 11 questions has been addressed (with the Court declining to answer a couple) but the overall judgment should help to clarify the doubts about the exact rights and privileges of minority educational institutions in the country.

The judgment insulates unaided minority educational institutions from possible interference from the relevant university or Government by making it clear that the latter is forbidden from meddling with the affairs of the former. The only concessions made are for the sake of transparency and excellence, with the Court demanding that such institutions are governed in an open manner and that they give merit due primacy in admission policy. While minority educational institutions that avail of Government aid do not

lose their stamp or character, they come under the purview of state regulation. Such institutions are also obliged to admit a certain percentage of non-minority students in order to comply with the guarantee in Article 29 (2), which states that a citizen shall not be denied admission to state-aided educational institutions on the grounds of religion, race, caste or language. As for the percentage of non-minority students to be admitted in such institutions, the Court has left the issue open, permitting the relevant university or Government to decide this matter.

Those who hold the view that minority educational rights are absolute and are against any external regulation over state-aided educational institutions might be unhappy with the order. But it is important to recognise that, when read as a whole, the judgment upholds the rights of minorities to establish and run educational institutions even as it subjects those institutions falling under a certain category to additional state control. The judgment also overturns two previous Supreme Court verdicts that dealt with capitation fees in professional colleges and management quotas for student admissions. With respect to the former, the Court has lifted the regulation on fees to be charged by unaided institutions with the proviso that there should not be "profiteering". Given the pragmatic difficulty in distinguishing between "profiteering/capitation" and between generating a "reasonable surplus to augment facilities", it is possible that the Court's ruling will only encourage free professional colleges to charge whatever fees students are willing to pay. As for the decision to set aside 50 per cent of the seats in state-aided minority institutions to the management's discretion, the Court has affirmed the principle but left the exact percentage to be set aside to be calculated by keeping various factors in mind. The verdict gives State Governments the discretion on how to deal with aided minority educational institutions and it remains to be seen how they frame policies with respect to the judgment which is now the final judicial word on this sensitive subject.

2 NOV 2002

# Minority institutions no different from others: SC

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 31. — An 11-member Constitution Bench today ruled that minority educational institutions getting state funds would have to function within a framework laid down by the state. The regulations would pertain both to admissions and their administration.

Even institutions not getting aid in admission and other matters, and their right to administer can't possibly extend to a right to maladminister. But the control over unaided institutions would be minimal, and aimed at attaining standards of excellence.

The court made a distinction between schools and undergraduate colleges and institutions of higher learning and centres imparting professional education. Though professional and higher studies' institutes would be subject to a higher degree of control or supervision, some students from the community running the institutes

would be admitted on priority basis. Most of the court's controls pertained to admissions, and even unaided schools would have to admit students from other communities; their numbers to be worked out on the basis of the local population.

The changes in the constitutional provision's interpretation that minorities were entitled to "establish and administer educational institutions of their choice" is expected to have far-reaching implications for the minority-run schools and colleges. The verdict came after a legal process stretching over several years which involved tussling together over 200 petitions challenging vari-

ous laws/instructions issued by state governments.

In the majority judgment written by the Chief Justice for himself and five other members, Mr Justice BN Kirpal held that "the right to admit students being an essential facet of the right to administer educational institutions, as contemplated under Article 30, the state government or the university may not be entitled to interfere with that right, so long as the admission to the unaided institution is on transparent and merit is adequately taken care of... The right to administer, not being absolute, there could be regula-

- In unaided institutions, admission to be 'transparent and fair'
- In state-aided institutions, admission must for non-minorities
- Ratio of minority/non-minority students in schools to depend on the local population
- No state control on staff appointment, but the standards have to be met and maintained

tory measures for ensuring educational standards and maintaining excellence thereof, and it is more so in the matter of admission to professional institutions."

The five judges who agreed with the Chief Justice were Mr Justice GB Pattanaik, Mr Justice S Rajendra Babu, Mr Justice KG Balakrishnan, Mr Justice P Venkatarama Reddi and Mr Justice Arijit Pasayat. The other five, Mr Justice VN Khare, Mr Justice SSM Quadri, Ms Justice Ruma Pal, Mr Justice SN Variava and Mr Justice Ashok Bhan, gave four separate judgments that generally concurred with the majority judgment except in the nature of the regulations to be imposed on the unaided institutions.

**Pat for Soli:** The SC today appreciated the "assistance rendered" by Mr Soli Sorabjee. The A-G had been asked by the court to make submissions in his personal capacity after he didn't appear for the government, for he had appeared earlier for one of the parties in the case.

J. B. & Co.

# Cong arms for textbook battle

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

*BJP*  
*calls*

New Delhi, Oct. 16: Opposition leaders today planned the burial of the new NCERT social science textbooks even as Murlī Manohar Joshi highlighted before the media his ministry's efforts at upgrading school curriculum.

"We have asked most Congress-ruled states to review the social science textbooks and not to use them," said Congress leader Manmohan Singh. The Congress is in power in 14 states while the BJP and its allies rule six.

Leaders from seven parties — the Congress, the CPM, the CPI, the Samajwadi Party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Nationalist Congress Party and the CPI(ML) — met at the CPI headquarters and asked states ruled by them as well as the Telugu Desam Party and the Biju Janata Dal to "reject" the textbooks.

Besides factual errors like describing Madagascar as "an island in the Arabian Sea", the ninth standard social science textbook brought out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training does not have a line on Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. It also describes the October revolution in the former Soviet Union as a "coup"

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masterminded by Lenin.

While NCERT chief J.S. Rajput has made it clear the council will correct only factual errors, Joshi said issues like whether Gandhi's assassination should be mentioned "should be decided by the authors and the teachers", not by his ministry.

How effective will be the call of the Opposition leaders would depend on the school examination boards which will have to exclude the NCERT textbooks while setting question papers. Otherwise, students would have to contend with questions from books they are not familiar with.

Usually, state examination boards are packed with representatives from parties governing the states. This would help the Opposition implement its plan. Till the eighth standard the decision whether or not to use a particular textbook rests with individual schools.

Last time the Opposition had the support of NDA allies like the Desam when they campaigned against the new national curriculum. With the arrival of the new social science textbooks in the market, the Opposition is demanding a meeting of all education ministers to discuss the textbooks and a thorough review so that a consensus can be evolved.

# Opposition parties reject new NCERT textbooks

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 16.** The Opposition parties today joined hands to renew their battle against "saffronisation of education" and "unanimously" rejected the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) and the two social science textbooks brought out by the National Council of Education Research and Training recently.

This and other decisions were taken at a meeting of the Opposition leaders called by the Communist Party of India here.

The parties decided that they would not adopt the textbooks in the States where they were in power and enlarged the scope of their protest by appealing to the allies of the Bharatiya Janata Party — the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh and the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa — to join hands.

The textbooks, 'Contemporary India' for class IX and 'India and the World' for class VI, were introduced after the Supreme Court lifted its interim stay on their publication.

The Opposition parties claim that the books contain "errors and slants" which need to be removed.

Briefing correspondents later, the CPI general secretary, A. B. Bardhan, said the parties had also decided on a mass movement against the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance at the Centre. They would organise a national convention here either

during the last week of November or first week of December. The parties demanded that the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) be reconstituted. And that the Centre convene a meeting of the State Education Ministers, since education was on the concurrent list of the Constitution.

The States needed to be consulted before any change in the national education policy was introduced, they maintained.

Explaining the rationale behind asking Andhra Pradesh and Orissa to be part of the campaign, Mr. Bardhan said that their Education Ministers had joined the Opposition when it staged a walk-out from a Conference of State Education Ministers in 1998, protesting against the attempt to 'spiritualise and nationalise' the school syllabus.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, said the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, had already instructed the Congress-ruled States to appoint a committee to go into the changes made in the textbooks.

The leaders who attended the meeting included the CPI (M) politburo member, Prakash Karat, the Bihar Education Minister, Ramchandra Purve (RJD), Rama Shankar Kaushik and Mohan Singh (Samajwadi Party), Surendra Mohan (Janata Dal-Secular), Lok Janshakti Party chief, Ram Vilas Paswan, Abani Roy (RSP), G. Devarajan (AIFB), Master Pitambar (Nationalist Congress Party) and J. Chittaranjan and D. Raja (CPI). The former NCERT chief, Arjun Dev, was also present.

# Boost for campaign against 'saffronisation' of education

By Anita Joshua

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 15.** The campaign against the "saffronisation of education" is likely to get a shot in the arm with the 'education wing' of the Congress recommending that all the States ruled by the party reject the new syllabus in toto.

A recommendation, urging the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to instruct all party Chief Ministers to reject the new syllabus, has been forwarded to her by the 'education wing' after a meeting it organised with party leaders, concerned citizens and historians this past Sunday.

At the meeting, the party also decided to take the campaign to the people as it was felt that the fight against "saffronisation of education" should not be confined to the realm of politics. Should the Congress president accept this recommendation, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) — brought out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training — will not be introduced in 14

Congress-ruled States plus Jammu & Kashmir if the party forms a government there.

With Wednesday's Opposition meet on saffronisation expected to also recommend rejection of the NCFSE by all States where they are in power, their number could swell as two are ruled by the Left and two have the Congress in the ruling coalition.

Of these four States, Education Ministers of all but Meghalaya had registered their objection to the NCFSE by walking out of the 38th Annual General Meeting of NCERT in May this year.

Besides the Congress and the other three Left parties — CPI (M), RSP and Forward Bloc — the Opposition parties invited to this meeting are the Samajwadi Party, Janata Dal (Secular), Lok Janshakti Party, and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). As of today, all but the NCP had confirmed their participation.

Announced on October 9 in the wake of the Supreme Court verdict, which rejected a public interest litigation against the

NCFSE, the Opposition meet assumes significance given the fact that apprehensions of "saffronisation" have been confirmed by the social science textbooks that were released in subsequent days.

Claiming that the social science books had certain distortions not only in Indian history but also in world history, the CPI national secretary, D. Raja, said the meeting would formulate a future course of action in the light of this "evidence".

Given the fact that the AICC meeting on saffronisation also concluded with a call to mobilise public opinion on the issue and take it out of the political domain, the Congress is expected to propose this at tomorrow's meeting.

As the chairman of AICC's Department of Policy Planning & Co-ordination, Salman Khurshid, put it: "The Congress has decided to join hands with all those who are uncomfortable with the NCFSE and work towards ensuring that this syllabus does not survive even the duration of the current dispensation at the Centre."

*Board of Culture 16/10/11*

## PAST TENSE

Open the books; watch Joshi closely

INDIA is neither unique nor the worst case when it comes to teaching "doctored" history. Indeed, amnesia as state education policy is practised more brazenly in developed countries. Post-war Japanese school history books were dressed to give the country's dreadful war record a better appearance. British school history is dominated by early monarchy, world wars and the Cold War — periods of British triumph. The somewhat less celebratory record of colonialism is largely untaught. Compared to this, the controversies over Indian history teaching are minimal. A brief review of history education will start with the ascendancy and consolidation of the nationalist-Left "ideology" for most of the post-independent period followed by attempts from nationalist-Right to introduce some of its hobby-horses. As such, the situation is far from the brainwashing conspiracy that the petitioners on the NCERT syllabi suggested. The Supreme Court (coram, Shah, Dharmadhikari, Sema, JJ) has retained a sense of proportion. NCERT's textbooks are, after all, not finding faults with the Mahatma as a person, or saying that Nehru was too much in love with the upper class English socialist worldview to do any good for India, or that Partition riots were a good thing. All the major certainties, the articles of faith have been retained in the syllabi. Deleting beef eating references is silly. But then "Rightwing" academia in India is itself a bit silly. If India's "Left-wing" intelligentsia considers this to be major revisionist project, either they are bad at identifying dangers or a little mad that their five decade suzerainty over the academe is challenged, or both.

As for the issue of "religious education", the Supreme Court's observation — that education in religions is not the same as religious education — is impossible to better. And unnecessary to elaborate. Except perhaps to add that India is by no means the only country, which will have such "value education" in school curricula. There can be reservations, as this newspaper has, about whether any religion is a good vehicle for teaching children "values". Whether, in fact, "love for all", as the court coined the phrase, is not best taught through simple, earthly principles: respect differences, respect others' choices, protest only when one's actions manifestly curtails another's freedom. But in so far as the NCERT has decided that divinity is a window that can be gainfully opened to children, it has, as the court said, gone about the right way. As high as the gods are you can currently find Murli Manohar Joshi's beaming face. The HRD minister is understandably several rungs above cloud nine following the judgment. He should understand — politicians are often wont not to — that a legal green light on the right of NCERT to frame syllabi is not a general go-ahead for schemes like village schools with a hidden agenda of conversion; the idea was in circulation for a while. Those who dislike the HRD minister should seriously start monitoring him — flush with a "victory" and probably spoiling for "ideas" — now, and allow school teachers and children to get on with their textbooks.



# CPM wants syllabi review

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**Statesman News service**

NEW DELHI, Sept. 13. — The Congress demanded an “immediate meeting” of the Central Advisory Board of Education (Cabe) to discuss the alleged saffronised curricula, a day after the Supreme Court upheld the National Curriculum Framework of Secondary Education (NCFSE - 2002). The CPI-M politburo demanded a “review of the majority judgement by a full Bench of the Supreme Court”.

Mr Jaipal Reddy said the court’s observation that the government need not discuss

the Cabe in finalising the syllabi since the latter was not a statutory body, was “legalistically correct”. But the Cabe, having representation of all the chief ministers, has been a platform for evolving a “national consensus” on the curricula.

A CPI-M leader said: “Tampering with the secular content of the education system has serious consequences to both our federal polity and secularism, which the Supreme Court itself has defined as a basic feature of our Constitution. The majority judgement must, therefore, be reviewed by the full Bench of

the Supreme Court. This is necessary to establish a mechanism to evolve a national consensus on the subject of education in our federal polity...”

“Mr Reddy said his party, has nothing against imparting religious education in a “positive way” and that its opposition was to the attempt to saffronise education.

Dr Murli Manohar Joshi said in Bhopal that the Supreme Court’s verdict vindicated his stand that there were no attempts by the BJP-led NDA government to “saffronise” education in the country.

## INVENTING HISTORY

THE NEW TEXTS prepared by the National Council for Education, Research and Training (NCERT) for schools affiliated to the Central Board for Secondary Education are out now and even a cursory glance at them shows a whole lot of factual errors and erroneous notions being vended as truths. The Social Science text, for instance, describes Madagascar as an island in the Arabian Sea, identifies the Czars as a dynasty or a family (while "Czar" in Russian means "the emperor"), includes Subramania Bharathi among those who spread their activities in England and other European countries (Bharathi had only sought asylum in Pondicherry, a French territory, for a short while and was never abroad) and states that Stalin was the first European ruler to enter into a peace agreement with Hitler (whereas the Munich Pact was signed much earlier between Hitler's Germany, France and England). All such factually incorrect statements in the school texts can certainly not be wished away as errors caused by oversight, as the mandarins in the NCERT are now doing. Instead, they reflect the level of scholarship and the lack of commitment to academic rigour on the part of those engaged in the exercise.

There are also ideas that defy historical logic and are not backed by facts, conveying faulty notions of the past, in the new texts. An illustration of this is the glorification of the Vedic age when the text states that the Vedic people were familiar with the use of "zero", that "they also knew that the earth moved on its own axis and around the sun" and that "they also knew that the moon revolved around the sun". Apart from an intention to convey that the Vedic civilisation was a "superior" one (an idea inherent to the Sangh Parivar's view of history), the trouble in this context is that the same text, at a later stage, conveys that "zero" was "introduced in North India after the Mauryas and the Sungas". The text also contains passages that it was Aryabhata who "suggested that the earth re-

volves around the sun and rotates on its axis". It is strange that the authors were unaware that Aryabhata lived in the Fifth Century A.D. and hence several hundred years after the Vedic civilisation flourished. Now, a student in school is exposed to two contradictory suggestions (in two different contexts in the same text) regarding a fact about astronomy.

There are other infirmities too. The Social Science text dealing with contemporary Indian history (avowedly to inform the school-going students of the developments after Independence) does not mention anywhere the assassination of Gandhi! Similarly, the narrative on the Quit India movement states that "the only political elements who did not support the Quit India movement were the Indian communists and the followers of Jinnah". It is strange that the authors were unaware that Shyama Prasad Mookerjee (who founded the Bharathiya Jana Sangh in 1952) remained the Finance Minister of the Bengal Presidency (under Fazl-ul-Haq) for at least six months after August 9, 1942. Mookerjee was the leader of the Hindu Maha Sabha then. Another such distortion is in the section dealing with the last of the Maurya kings, Brihadratha, who was killed by his own army chief, Pushyamitra Sunga (in 187 B.C.); the authors state that "this is the only incident in the history of India till the Twelfth Century A.D.". Ancient texts, the *Rajatharangini* for example, will show a succession of patricides across the ancient kingdoms even before the Mauryan era. The intention is to convey that sons killing fathers (to capture the throne) was witnessed in the Indian kingdoms only after the invasion of Mohammed Ghazni. Such untruths have been the staple diet upon which the cadre of the Sangh Parivar has been brought up. But then, to introduce such false statements into the school curriculum is indeed a dangerous proposition. The havoc that indifferent scholarship combining with a distorting ideology could cause in school education is all too apparent.

'EDUCATION IN RELIGIONS IS NOT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION'

# Textbooks not biased, says SC

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 12. — The Supreme Court (coram, Shah, Dharmadhikari and Sema, JJ) today rejected a petition accusing the government of saffronising school syllabi in the new National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education (NCFSE-2002) and ruled that non-consultation with the Central Advisory Board for Education (CABE) could not be a ground for setting aside the national curriculum.

An elated Union human resources development minister, Mr Murli Manohar Joshi, later said his stand had been vindicated, and hit back at his detractors for playing politics with education. He called the allegations of saffronisation to be "politically motivated, mischievous or made out of ignorance".

But even as the three-judge Bench ruled that the courts could only interdict a policy on education if it was violative of Constitutional provisions, there was a difference of opinion on the matter of the government bypassing CABE. Justice Mr Dharmadhikari and Justice Mr Shah concurred that since the CABE was a non-statutory body, its consultation was not mandatory for framing the new syllabus. Justice Mr Shah held that the court was not to decide why CABE was not reconstituted. Justice Mr Dharmadhikari ruled that though it was desirable to consult CABE in evolving a longterm policy on education, it was for the government and Parliament to decide whether to reconstitute CABE or do away with it.

But Justice Mr Sema expressed reservations on this count and pointed out that though CABE was not a statutory body, the fact that it had been playing an important role in the framing of educational syllabi since 1935 could not be overlooked.

There had to be consensus on an important

policy decision in education such as the NCFSE-2002, and the role of CABE in building a consensus between the states and the Centre "cannot be undermined", said Justice Mr Sema. He directed the Central government to immediately reconstitute the CABE and seek its views on the new curriculum.

Rejecting the contention of the petitioners that the syllabus tried to insert religious teachings, Justice Mr Shah said: "NCFSE nowhere talks of imparting religious education. What is sought to be imparted is value education through the teaching of the essence of all religions, which is based on the theme 'love for all'."

The petitioners accused the government of revising the syllabi for school education to orient the same "towards the promotion of the political and religious ideology (favouring) some sections of the government". The respondents had also deleted portions of existing textbooks without the permission of the concerned authors wherever the sections were found to be opposed to the so-called "religious sentiments" of some group, they said.

Justice Mr Shah said dogmas and superstition should not be propagated in the name of religion, adding that there was no harm in teaching the universal values of truth, righteousness and non-violence that are the essence of all religions.

Justice Mr Dharmadhikari, concurring with the views of Justice Mr Shah, said the teaching of religion could be imparted even in state-funded and semi-aided schools: "Education in religions has to be differentiated from religion education imparted in minority educational institutions."

Terming the right to know about religions as a fundamental right of the students, he noted that the Constitution does not prohibit the study of religion. "Any interpretation of Article 28 to deprive the students of the education in religions would be a violation of their fundamental right," Justice Mr Dharmadhikari said.

## NCERT texts

NEW DELHI, Sept. 12. — The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) today said it will release History and Social Sciences textbooks within three weeks. It also added it had a sufficient number of Hindi textbooks which will be in the market soon. — SNS

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THE STATESMAN

# 'Errors' galore in NCERT textbooks

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 4. If the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) had hoped that the Supreme Court nod for the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) would silence the criticism vis-a-vis the new textbooks, their hopes were dashed today with school teachers finding errors galore in the social science texts.

After a "cursory" glance at the social science textbooks — which were just released after the final order of the Supreme Court in the public interest litigation against the NCFSE lifted the interim stay on their publication — school teachers today suggested their perusal would reveal many more mistakes and slants.

Briefing mediapersons here today from the SAHMAT platform, the teachers said their worst fears had been confirmed as the textbooks proved that the NCERT was determined to destroy the secular character of the

school curriculum and educational materials. Of the view that the new textbooks sought to subvert the basic purposes of education, the teachers said it could be prevented only through the active intervention of the society. "These books and others of the same ilk which are likely to be brought out should not be allowed to be prescribed or recommended in schools."

While some of the mistakes reflect the "academic bankruptcy" of those entrusted the task of writing the books, others are indicative of the definite slant that is sought to be given to school education.

The glaring mistakes include 'Madagascar is an island in the Arabian Sea', 'the Czars is the name of a dynasty', 'the Great Wall of China has been made of terracotta',... And, Mahatma Gandhi's assassination does not find even a mention in the book on Contemporary India for Class IX.

More worrying were the sweeping statements that prejudice the minds and the deliberate efforts to introduce

Osama bin Laden into the text. While the NCERT contention is that the textbook seeks to link India with the world, the teachers have questioned the inset on Bin Laden in the ancient India text on 'cultural contacts with the outside world'.

While referring to Buddhism travelling to Central Asia, an inset has been put to state that a Buddha statue in Bamiyan had been destroyed by the Taliban.

Though the Contemporary India section ends at 1950, there are odd references to Osama Bin Laden, and the 1996 general elections when the BJP formed the Government at the Centre, but "unfortunately" could not prove its majority. The Russian Revolution has been described as a coup, and Fascism and Nazism have been sought to be justified as nothing more than a "sort of a counterpart of the dictatorship of the proletariat... imposed... by Stalin" with no mention of the excesses committed by the two regimes.

## TEACHER, TEACH THYSELF

Indefensible Duta strike 5.8

DELHI University likes to call itself one of the premier educational institutions in the country. Given the number of outstation students it attracts — in contrast with Stalinised Calcutta University — that claim has a basis. But Delhi University teachers, of late, have shown that given the chance, they can drag the institution close to Calcutta University's level of dysfunction. DU students have now been subjected to weeks of marching, slogan-shouting and relay hunger striking teachers. For those who left high school to join first year courses this year, the Delhi University Teachers' Association (Duta) strike must come as a frightening introduction to the world of higher education. A world where a great majority of teachers do very moderate work, where standards of teaching are average at most, where government-set pay is substantially hiked in recent years and where despite all this, unionised teachers are livid because they have been asked to work harder. Quite apart from the point that this isn't the role model students should be looking at while preparing themselves for a working life, Duta's increasingly tiresome theatrics beg a few very serious questions.

First, if the University Grants Commission's (UGC) directives on increasing working hours — including teaching, preparatory and administrative duties — are indeed so grossly unfair, as Duta claims, how does one explain an equation like this — given the new teachers' salary scales, and scheduled working hours, a reader gets around Rs 400 for an hour's labour. UGC's directives ask for 40 hours a week. A figure that most professions will consider perfectly acceptable and some will regard enviously. Second, for the sake of argument, accept Duta's point that increasing teachers' "workload" is a poor answer to improving education standards. What does Duta have to offer in exchange? Is it a different system of accountability, like students' evaluation, which is implemented in many Western universities? Is it saying that teachers' jobs, instead of being secured government employment, should be periodically judged against a benchmark like published research, also a widespread practice in the West? Is Duta arguing that privatisation of higher education, with merit-need based scholarships for poor students, is a must if our universities and specialised institutes are not to lose the brightest teaching and student talents? What Duta is saying is that reforms like privatisation are anti-education — a tired old cliché that fails to explain why the world's best talent hammers at the doors of American universities, most of which are privately funded and managed.

In essence, therefore, a section of Delhi University teachers — not all teachers, thankfully, go along with the association — are arguing that the only way to improve education is to allow them to do exactly what they want. It is understandably a very attractive plan for some obvious beneficiaries, but not so for students, the future of India. If Duta persists in going with its own thesis, perhaps UGC should arrange for a paid trip to Calcutta University for the office bearers. The catastrophic fall in standards of this once great institution of learning may just teach DU teachers a few lessons in education policy.

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THE STATESMAN

## Time-bound Teachers

The University Grants Commission's directive requiring college and university lecturers to spend a minimum of 22 hours a week in direct teaching is the product of budgetary cutbacks rather than pedagogic wisdom. It may seem odd, at first blush, that teachers should protest about teaching a mere 22 hours. However, if one considers the amount of time academics require to prepare lectures of good quality — as well as the time they need to spend doing research — it is clear that most conscientious teachers work more than 40 hours a week. In university systems around the world, lecturers rarely spend more than 12 to 15 hours in direct teaching activities a week. The average college lecturer in India does not have any office space. If computers are available, Internet connectivity is unlikely. Libraries are poorly stocked. Now, the UGC says universities must implement a complete freeze on all permanent recruitment, abolish all posts which have been vacant for more than a year, and cut staff strength by 10 per cent. And it is in order to ensure that these cutbacks do not affect the quantum of teaching that existing lecturers are being asked to work longer. Obviously, the quality of teaching — and academic work in general — will decline. While it is true that some college teachers do not take their classes regularly, the UGC and the institutions concerned must find a proper way to hold them accountable. An absentee teacher will continue to play truant even if the number of hours he is required to teach goes up.

As a former university teacher himself, human resource development minister Murli Manohar Joshi should be aware of the unsound state that the Indian higher education system is in today. Thanks to years of sustained financial neglect, most Indian universities and colleges do no research worth the name. Even as the number of students entering colleges has increased dramatically, public investment in higher education has actually declined in relative terms. Between 1985 and 1997, when public expenditure on higher education as a percentage of outlays on all levels of education grew by more than 60 per cent in Malaysia and 20 per cent in Thailand, India showed a decline of more than 10 per cent. Throughout the world, the number of teachers in higher education per million population grew by more than 10 per cent in the same period; in India it fell by one per cent. Instead of transferring the burden of governmental apathy on to the backs of the teachers, the UGC should insist that the needs of the country's university system are adequately catered for.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2002

*Edus Culture*

## PRIMARY CONCERNS REMAIN

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BY UPHOLDING THE revised National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education formulated by the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT), the Supreme Court has only made the point that there was nothing seriously wrong with the procedure adopted by the Council in finalising the framework. This, however, cannot be held as the apex court approving the substantive changes suggested in the National Curriculum Framework and the consequent deletions ordered by the NCERT in the texts prescribed for schools affiliated to the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE). This emerges so clearly from the note of caution recorded by the judges constituting the Bench that "it is not the province of the court to decide on the good or bad points" and that "it is ultimately for Parliament to take a decision on the national education policy one way or other". It is the fact that the judgment relates to the narrow focus of the petition that the apex court's judgment cannot be construed as an unqualified endorsement of the new curriculum and the consequent revisions in the textbooks.

The concerns over the changes brought about in the curriculum framework, after all, are not based merely on technical and procedural aspects. The objections, instead, are based on substantive aspects and emanate directly from a circular issued by the CBSE to all affiliated schools (issued soon after the new National Curriculum Framework was finalised) in November 2001 and put on hold when the apex court issued an interim stay in the wake of a Public Interest Litigation in March 2002. While the stay has now been vacated, the apex court, nevertheless, has made it clear that the judgment pertained to just the procedure adopted. The observations by Justice D. M. Dharmadhikari on the need to ensure that religious education is not reduced to "religious instructions" assumes a lot of significance. The potential for abuse of the "freedom" to impart religious education to indoctrinate children and curb their

inquisitiveness and free-thinking in the name of religion has been pointed out by the judge even while concurring with the judgment. Some of the changes now implemented by the NCERT through the CBSE are objectionable in this context alone and if the apex court did not go into these, it is only because the Judiciary (as underscored by the Bench here) is not the forum to settle the dispute.

As for instance, among the portions ordered to be deleted from the history texts (for Class XI) by the CBSE (based on the new curriculum framework) are tracts that elaborate on how the 'varna' system, which started out as a division of labour, was then made hereditary by law and religion. While this historical truth substantiated with such scrupulous detail by R.S. Sharma (an authority on the socio-economic history of the Vedic times and due to which he was commissioned by the NCERT to write the text-book concerned) intended to depict the inequity that prevailed then, deleting such portions now is aimed at propagating a notion that the Vedic civilisation was indeed a glorious era. Apart from manufacturing a mindset that will in effect glorify the caste-based oppression perpetrated then, the young minds brought up with a staple diet of such distorted notions about the past will be led to condemn the various forms of assertion by the historically oppressed caste groups as social crimes. The same is true of the idea to redefine nationalism in religious and cultural terms — based on the hypothesis that the Aryans were the original inhabitants in India and that the Vedic civilisation pre-dated the Harappan civilisation — put forward by Hindu nationalist historians. The end-game, in all these, is to deny the pluralist and democratic spirit of the nationalist struggle that guided the making of the Indian nation. For all these reasons, the apprehensions that the National Curriculum Framework is in some part an effort to inculcate a version of history that would suit a political agenda remain as valid and as persistent even now.

16 SEP 2002

THE HINDU

## MORE HASTE, LESS HEED

The temperature in the political atmosphere has risen a sharp degree or two, all because of a Supreme Court ruling on the new school curriculum. Opponents and critics of the Bharatiya Janata Party grew over-anxious that the new syllabus published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training would be a bid to "saffronize education". So they jumped the gun, and went with their fears to the Supreme Court even before the new books were out. But the court has seen nothing obviously wrong with the proposed syllabus. Instead, it has rubbished fears about "value-education" by stating that

the aim of such education is to spur on a national fight against fanaticism and violence. Teaching children that religions differ not in their basics but only in their practices will help build a tolerant society. This is the stark opposite of what the petitioners believe the BJP intends doing. But they should have thought twice

before taking a bundle of apprehensions to court. Irrational opposition is counter-productive, especially damaging when the issue is something as crucial as children's education.

The legal and technical soundness of the judgment, however, is irrelevant to both the proponents and the opponents of the syllabus. At the moment, the *sangh parivar* is crowing, and rather foolishly advertising its educational agenda. This does not mean that the textbooks would contain the kind of divisive sentiments

the sangh habitually expresses. To assess that, the critics will have to wait till the books come out. Shrill rhetoric is part of the political game, there may or may not be substance behind it.

The BJP has not given its critics any reason to believe that it will not try to further its own political agenda through the new syllabus. But that allegation would stick more or less to all political forces. All parties in power like to have syllabi of their preference in schools, and the BJP's present sense of victory is particularly directed towards left parties and leftist intellectuals. The real question is a far more basic one. Education in schools is not a po-

litical affair, it is not a sphere where political agendas should enter by the side door. Yet that is exactly what has been happening — with a routine blandness that makes it seem perfectly normal. The brazenness of the *Hindutva* parties and the BJP's perceived complicity in events and decisions geared to undermine dem-

ocracy have merely made visible the inappropriateness of an arrangement that predates the BJP's stint in power. The petitioners' complaint that the syllabus was made without consulting the Central Advisory Board of Education was overruled by a majority judgment. The CAGE is a non-statutory body and therefore need not be consulted. It is perhaps time that a statutory, scholarly body was constituted to plan syllabi and choose textbooks. That would not completely cut out politics, of course, but it would add credibility.

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The Supreme Court's judgment on the NCERT syllabus exposes the folly of rushing to court with little else but a bundle of fears

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1 5 SEP 2003



# Free education of class bias: Amartya

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, August 16

THE DEEP-ROOTED class and caste bias in the education system must be removed to save primary education from collapsing in the State, Amartya Sen said today.

The Nobel laureate was releasing the Pratichi Trust's Education Report, compiled over a year during which the team surveyed schools in Darjeeling, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Purulia, Midnapore and Burdwan districts.

"The team found a class gulf between teachers and students. The upper class, well-paid, well-lettered teachers pay scant attention to students from lower classes. The rate of teacher absenteeism is higher in schools where a majority of the students are from the lower classes," Sen said. The report uses the term 'lower class' to include minorities, lower castes and tribals.

Private tuition and teachers' unionism have added to the collapse of the primary education system, says the report. "Private tuition works differently in rural areas. Few teachers give tuition to students of their own school. Rather, the rural rich ensure private tuition for



HT PHOTO  
Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen speaks his mind in Kolkata on Friday.

their children," Sen said.

Children from poor families are dependent on the system and are too afraid to raise their voice against the teachers, who are usually from the upper classes. The pitch is further queered by teachers' unionism or "economism" as Sen calls it. "Economism is where an interest group fights to ensure its interests. Teachers in Bengal are well paid; it is time they looked beyond their narrow self-interests to look at the interests of the society, the underprivileged," Sen said. The report

highlights a high incidence of tuition among the children of the rural rich — 45 per cent of them hired private tutors, mostly unemployed youth) is high — 45 per cent of the students had private tutors. "The solution, says Sen, is to give the poorer sections more voice.

The report suggests setting up of 'parent-teacher committees' at each school. "These should be small groups; in larger groups the upper classes will tend to dominate. Most importantly, these committees should be given legal powers," he said.

Sen said banning private tuition would be hard. "Instead, the need for private tuition should be removed and class bias combated."

He welcomed the mid-day meal scheme, which has increased attendance and provides nutrition to underprivileged children.

The report found that the school inspection system had become defunct as the inspectors were terrified of teachers' unions. One good thing is that the poor are enthusiastic about sending their children, even girls, to school.

17 AUG 2002

THE HINDU

# NCERT denies charges against national curriculum

By Our Legal Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 2.** The National Council for Education, Research and Training (NCERT) has strongly refuted the allegation that the National Curriculum Framework 2000 has been given a "Brahmanical approach".

Senior counsel for the council, M.N. Krishnamani, made this denial before a Bench comprising Justice M.B. Shah, Justice D.M. Dharmadhikari and Justice H.K. Sema, which reserved orders at the conclusion of arguments by counsel for the petitioners — social activist, Aruna Roy and two others — C.S. Vaidyanathan, Solicitor-General, Harish Salve for the Centre, and P.P. Rao for the Central Board of Secondary Education.

Denying that the curriculum had been given a "Brahmanical approach", counsel citing an anecdote from the Upanishads, drew the attention of the court that no distinction had been made on

caste-basis in the scriptures.

He also denied the submission that Islam as religion was not included in the school syllabus. Under the title "people and society in the ancient period", Islam was not included in "major religions".

However, in the topic "people and society in the medieval period", Islam had been included under the heading "religious developments", he submitted.

Quoting the Upanishads, counsel submitted that teaching religion by itself was not wrong.

The apprehension of the petitioners' counsel in this regard was unfounded.

On the allegation that the Central Advisory Board on Education was not consulted, he said the NCERT had 51 members and only 14 of them walked out of the meeting (for political reasons) convened to discuss the curriculum.

The others had endorsed the curriculum and minutes had been recorded to this effect.

## Centre attempting to saffronise education, counsel tells SC

By Our Legal Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 30.** By trying to implement the revised national curriculum framework, the Centre is attempting to 'saffronise' education, which has the effect of impinging on the country's secular character, argued senior counsel C.S. Vaidyanathan in the Supreme Court hearing a petition challenging the new curriculum.

Making his submissions before a Bench, comprising M. B. Shah, D. M. Dharmadhikari and H. K. Sema, Mr. Vaidyanathan said the Government had changed the education policy without consulting the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), which comprised experts and State Education Ministers. Admitting a public interest petition filed by social activist Aruna Roy columnist B.G. Verghese and sociologist Meena Radhakrishna Tyabji challenging the new curriculum, the court had on March 1 stayed its implementation and the case was now listed for final disposal.

Arguing for the petitioners, he said the CABE was not consulted, though the National Policy on

Education had specifically stated that the CABE ought to be consulted.

Mr. Vaidyanathan said certain portions of textbooks had been deliberately deleted on grounds of religion. Such distortions in the textbooks would amount to religious propaganda, which would result in stultifying growth, development and spirit of critical inquiry of children at the primary age. The new curriculum was driven by a "Brahminical approach" and as there were repeated references to the Vedas and the Upanishads, the Bench took strong exception to these and told the counsel "do not abuse any caste, do not abuse the word Brahmin as it has a wider meaning," he said. Counsel said he was not abusing any caste or castigating anybody but was only trying to emphasise that the repeated reference to the Upanishads gave this impression. The Bench was quick to respond by saying, "How can India live without the Vedas and the Upanishads which are the essence of the spiritual heritage of the country. If you look at it with a coloured approach, it is coloured".

## NCERT flouts SC order, sneaks in new textbooks

By Sakina Yusuf Khan

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Last week, the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) quietly released new textbooks for Class XI in all social science subjects—sociology, political science, economics and geography. Experts point out that this is in complete violation of the supreme court's order.

The court, in its ruling of April 12, 2002, while vacating the ban on the implementation of the new national curriculum, had retained the stay on controversial subjects such as history, social sciences and Hindi.

Because of the court's ruling, textbooks in these subjects written on the basis of the new syllabus could not be released and students have had to do without them for the first four months of the current academic year. The next hearing of the supreme court is scheduled for July 30.

According to Arjun Dev, former NCERT professor, releasing these books before the court's next sitting amounts to a violation of the court's order. "The NCERT seems to be in an indecent haste to introduce them in complete contravention of the law and procedures. It is apparent from their shoddy nature that these books have been very hurriedly put together," he says.

# A-G long rope for minority schools

Syed Liaquat Ali  
New Delhi, July 26

ADVANCING HIS submissions for the second consecutive day before an 11-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the crucial minorities' case, Attorney-General Soli J Sorabjee on Friday said a Government-aided minority educational institution (MEI) cannot be barred from giving preference in admission to students from its own community.

However, he said the MEI can give preference to students of its community in a rational manner and it should not exclude students from other communities. The submissions differed from the Government's stand that a MEI loses its minority character under the Constitution once it receives aid from the Government.

Sorabjee said the Government couldn't give aid on conditions which impair the autonomy of a MEI and take away the rights of its management to admit students belonging only to minority community. He said the apex court would have to decide the extent of preference in admission an aided MEI could give to the students of its own community.

Sorabjee, who was assisting the Bench in his capacity as Attorney-General, said the correctness of the apex court's judgment in the St Stephen's case, allowing 50 per cent reservation for its own community is questionable. The Bench headed by Chief Justice B N Kirpal is hearing a batch of 200 petitions for deciding 11 questions on the extent of rights the minority communities could enjoy under the Constitution.

The Attorney-General did not express his own opinion on the



Soli Sorabjee

vexed question of imposition of restrictions on admission of students into the government-aided minority institutions. However, he presented before the Bench two arguable views.

He said it was argued that if the students belonging to other communities are denied admission in a minority-run institution because of non-availability of seats, there was no discrimination on the ground of religion.

Sorabjee said if the students were denied admission on the basis of their religion or language despite the availability of seats, then Article 29(2) would be attracted. The Article says: "No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them".

Sorabjee said the right of administration and management of a MEI under the Constitution also extends the right to admit students of its own community.

# Minority education institutions' rights not absolute, says Centre

FROM MR. VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, July 16: The Union government today contended before the Supreme Court that the governing body of minority institutions should not have "absolute management rights".

Suggesting radical changes in the interpretation of the right of minorities to establish and administer educational in-

stitutions, solicitor-general Harish Salve said the right enshrined in the Constitution could not be an absolute one and has to be subject to "reasonable restrictions".

"Article 30 of the Constitution confers the right to minority to establish educational institutions and administer them. But the right is not so wide to block state laws which

are applicable to all and enacted for attainment of secular objectives," Salve, appearing for the government, said before an 11-member bench.

Salve said that if the right under Article 30 was made absolute, then even if a minority educational institution taugt "secession or armed revolution", the government could not interfere in the

management of the school or college.

"Nobody can be allowed to do something against public order under the garb of the right to profess religion," he said, adding: "Whether majority or minority, the government cannot totally wash its hands of when it is the question of religion."

He argued that as the Con-

stitution permits legislative intervention in management and administration of secular schools, it was absurd if the same was not allowed in minority educational institutions.

Salve said under the Constitution, there was no such thing as an absolute right as no constitutional system had accepted such rights.

He said general laws meant

to achieve secular objectives should be applicable to educational institutions established and administered by minorities. But these general laws should not impair the right under Article 29 or Article 30, he added.

Salve said if the minority institution was wholly funded by the state, then the institution lost its right to administer

notwithstanding the rights under Article 30.

"If a minority institution is taking public funds then the right of equality will apply to the institution except for the reservation laws enacted by Parliament," he said.

The arguments in the case, which resumed today after the court's summer vacations, will continue on a day-to-day basis.

Around 200 petitions have been filed on the contentious issues of who constitute the minorities, what is a minority institution and several others.

These are to be heard by the biggest-ever 11-member bench of the Supreme Court. Other issues include what is religion/language and who are the linguistic/religious minorities.

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# NCERT hurls letters back at syllabus critics

FROM OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 31: The National Council of Educational Research and Training is trying to get even with state education ministers who have accused its director, J.S. Rajput, and human resource development minister Murli Manohar Joshi of ramming through a school syllabus that was not approved by the majority of states.

Furnishing letters written by the education ministers of Tripura and Karnataka, the NCERT said: "It is indeed unfortunate that such large scale consultations involving state education ministers and chief ministers are being ignored now."

The NCERT director accused the state education ministers of levelling "untenable and misleading" charges at his institution.

In his letter dated May 7, 2001, Tripura education minister Anil Sarkar wrote: "It was really a successful seminar and we have benefited from the valuable discussions held between the NCERT experts and our officials."

Karnataka education minister H. Vishwanath wrote to Joshi: "Some of the points of the curriculum framework have already been implemented in the

state's school curricula."

The NCERT has quoted these letters and recorded the number of meetings and discussion the it had sponsored with the states.

"Joshi is trying to point to the discussions as a measure of approval on our part. But discussions do not mean consensus," Bengal education minister Kanti Biswas had said after a group of 16 education ministers had walked out of the NCERT's annual general meeting last Sunday.

The council, however, is sticking to its stand that the extensive discussions can be taken as an indication of support by the states, especially when none of the education ministers, barring Kanti Biswas, had given his reservations on the syllabus in writing to the minister.

According to the NCERT, "Before the finalisation of the national curriculum framework, a number of regional and national seminars had been conducted to discuss the document. The output of these seminars was appropriately included in the final document released in November 2000."

In the face of opposition from state education ministers, Joshi has refused to budge on the new school curriculum. He also refused to convene the Central Advisory Board of Education.

THE TELEGRAPH

7 1 JUN 2002

# 16 Ministers walk out of NCERT meet

By Our Special Correspondent

*50 days  
culture* *11.05.07* *26/5*

**NEW DELHI, MAY 27.** Education Ministers of 16 States walked out of the 38th annual general meeting of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) here on Sunday to protest the Council's bid to misrepresent their stand vis-a-vis the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) in Parliament and the Supreme Court.

Though confirmation of the minutes of the December 2000 annual general meeting — during which, as per the affidavit submitted by the NCERT and the Human Resource Development Ministry in the Supreme Court in a public interest litigation against the curriculum, approval of the members had been obtained for the then proposed NCFSE — was listed first on the agenda, it came up for discussion a good two hours after the meeting began.

After a round of heated discussion with Council officials led by the HRD Minister and NCERT president, Murli Manohar Joshi, sticking to their guns, the 16 Education Ministers walked out of the meeting denouncing the Ministry and NCERT's efforts to "mislead the nation, Parliament and Supreme Court" by "asserting that the NCFSE was discussed and approved by the 37th annual general meeting held on December 13, 2000".

The 16 Education Ministers also demanded that the HRD Minister and the NCERT Director withdraw all such statements made in Parliament and the Supreme Court. Further, affirming that the appropriate forum for evolving and approving a national curriculum framework for the country was the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), they demanded that it be constituted and convened at the earliest, and the implementation of the NCFSE kept in abeyance till then.

The Ministers who walked out represented Rajasthan, Kerala, Nagaland, Assam, Karnataka, Chattisgarh, Uttaranchal, West Bengal, Punjab, Bihar, Tripura, Pondicherry, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

Earlier in the day, most of them had met and discussed their strategy for the meeting. While the West Bengal Education Minister, Kanti Biswas, led the offensive against the NCERT and the Ministry, the directive from the Congress central leadership to its State Education Ministers to take a clear stand against the efforts of the powers that be to "fabricate" a consensus on the NCFSE added strength to the effort.

THE HINDU

7 6 MAY 2007



# Students pawns in syllabus tussle

14/5 9-Edn. of textbooks

FROM MONOBINA GUPTA

New Delhi, May 13: The tussle is between the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Supreme Court. But it is the students who are paying the price.

The Supreme Court has stayed the circulation of the NCERT prescribed new History, Hindi and Social Science textbooks. This means that schools will have to revert to the old textbooks the NCERT had discarded as unfit. But the NCERT so far has shown no sign of "swallowing its pride" and re-printing the old textbooks on the controversial subjects.

Many schools are finding their own solution by putting together a book bank of the old textbooks. "The students who

have finished with these textbooks are asked to donate them to the book bank," said a teacher.

It's not just one or two junior classes that are feeling the pinch. As many as five classes from the first to the eleventh are facing a scarcity of the old NCERT textbooks. There is a crisis brewing over Hindi textbooks for classes I, III, VI, IX and XI — a dearth of Social Science textbooks for classes VI and IX and History textbooks for class XI.

Students in classes I, III, VI and IX have already gone without the controversial textbooks for a month. "The NCERT should print these old textbooks or else it can be charged with contempt of court," said an academic.

The CBSE feels the same — the NCERT is just trying to post-

pone the inevitable — eating a humble pie on an issue given top priority by not only the NCERT director but also by human resources development minister Murlidhar Joshi.

Just when the NCERT was patting itself on the back for being able to push through a highly controversial new school syllabus — the Supreme Court clamped down with an order refusing the NCERT permission to put out textbooks in line with its new syllabus for Hindi, Social Science and History.

The court order came after a public interest litigation was filed by social activists, accusing the education council of tampering with historical facts. The case will come up for hearing on July 12.

"The NCERT should not

stand on prestige — it should first think of the students and print the old textbooks," said a senior official in the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

He said the CBSE will soon take a formal stand on the textbook issue. "The NCERT should print the old textbooks," CBSE officials maintained.

But the advice seems to have gone unheard. The NCERT recently put out an advertisement announcing a list of the old textbooks it is going to print, which would be available with wholesale agents across the country.

The advertisement said the release of NCERT textbooks for Hindi, Social Science and History for classes I, III, VI, IX and XI have been delayed because of the Supreme Court judgment.

# Controversial question in Gujarat exam paper

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23. The Bharatiya Janata Party today officially offered an explanation on the extraordinary questions on Hitler's "final solution" posed to class XII students in the examination paper on 'Higher level English' in Gujarat.

"There are two solutions. One of them is the Nazi solution. If you don't like people, kill them, segregate them. Then strut up and down. Proclaim that you are the salt of the earth." The students were asked to join these sentences into one as part of a grammar exercise. Coming in the backdrop of the Gujarat incidents where over 800 men, women and children of the minority

community have been killed, the questions have led to controversy. The BJP spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, today offered an explanation even as he confirmed that the questions were indeed part of the examination paper. One, he said, "the question papers were set about five to six months ago." Two, this particular question paper was set by a minority community teacher." And three, the sentence "if you don't like people, kill them" was a quote from a text by E.M. Forster.

The issue was first brought to notice by a newspaper and it was also raised in the Lok Sabha today. Raising the issue during zero hour, the Deputy Leader of the Congress, Shivraj Patil, drew the Government's attention to the

newspaper report regarding the controversial questions. Waving a copy of the newspaper and the facsimile of the question paper, Mr. Patil wondered what kind of lessons were being imparted to the school students.

Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) also criticised the development. "There can be no two opinions about the seriousness of the situation". Later, at a press briefing, Mr. Malhotra circulated a note explaining why and how the questions were asked. The sum and substance of the explanation was that it was simply a coincidence that Hitler and his final solution figured in the question paper, and that "to associate the question with the present prevailing situation in Gujarat is highly malicious".

# Read the stars, UGC tells universities

**Sougata Mukhopadhyay**  
in Kolkata

April 21. — The universities of this state can take a walk. The UGC still has a say on the introduction of "Vedic Astrology" in the university curricula.

Despite much hue and cry over the University Grants Commission suggested introduction of astrology and its subsequent rejection by the state's universities late last year, the commission has made a fresh recommendation for a 400-mark Jyotisha segment in the MA Sanskrit course.

The recommendation accompanied the UGC's model curriculum in 32 subjects sent to the universities in a bid to implement the revised curricula from the next academic session.

The universities are provided with options "either to adopt it in toto or

adopt it after making necessary amendments or adopt it after necessary deletion/addition or to adopt it after making any change whatsoever which the university may consider right".

The foreword to the curriculum, dated December 2001, signed by the UGC chairman, Dr Hari Gautam, states this and adds that the necessary exercise must be completed by 31 July. "It is a must..." or else the UGC might "take an appropriate unpleasent action against the university", it read.

The Statesman already reported on the controversy brewing among the state's academics who conceived the ultimatum as a potential threat.

For MA in Sanskrit, papers VII, VIII, IX and X, each comprising of 100 marks, have been dedicated to Astrology. Each paper has been divided into five units, each having 20 marks. The list is pretty exhaustive and

even has books recommended for each paper.

Paper VII, Origin and Development of Jyotisha, range from general introduction to different branches of Astrology and Astronomy to theories and works of "pioneers in the field". 19 books have been recommended for the paper.

Paper VIII, Computation of Horoscope, includes knowledge of finding out the lagna (ascendant) and calculation of "longevity of life". Four books have been recommended.

Paper IX, Predictive Astronomy, centres around Vedic Numerology and Medical Astrology and has 11 books recommended for their learning.

Paper X, Miscellaneous Aspects of Predictive Astrology, has seven recommended books.

The model curriculum, "produced to take care of the lacuna, defects/shortcomings in the existing

curricula of certain universities", aims to "combine the goals and parameters of global knowledge with pride in the Indian heritage and Indian contribution," the foreword mentioned.

A Curriculum Development Committee for each subject was constituted with the respective convener as the nodal person, the UGC says.

Each committee constituted five subject experts and several sub-subject experts had been co-opted at the committee meetings from time to time as per need.

The Statesman received mixed reactions from senior university officials on the said proposals: while some expressed dissent, others preferred to remain non-committal.

"There's no way we are going to accept the proposed revised curricula. We have a unanimous consent in

favour of turning it down," said Professor Swapan Pramanik, syndicate member, Calcutta University.

"We have sent the recommendation to the of Sanskrit department for their opinion. Appropriate decisions will be taken only after we receive opinions from our own experts. We reserve the right to reject the proposals if necessary although conventionally there never has been an absolute rejection," said Mr Rajat Bandyopadhyay, registrar, Jadavpur University.

Professor Nityananda Saha, vice chancellor, Kalyani University said: "The matter is not much of a concern for us as we do not offer post graduation in Sanskrit. Personally, however, I feel we should not allow such unscientific courses to intrude. We have done that earlier. The final decision on this should be taken by the experts".

# 'Saffronised syllabus erodes NCERT credibility'

*J. Habibullah*

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 31. Breaking their silence a week-and-a-half after the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) released its syllabi for all subjects, historians opposed to the Sangh Parivar school of thought today said the history syllabus was not only "saffronised", but it also failed to stand up to academic scrutiny.

Coming together under the SAHMAT banner, the historians said the manner in which the curriculum had been revised — despite objections from a cross-section of society — had eroded the credibility of the NCERT as an academic body.

"With the NCERT authorities going ahead with the implementation of the agenda drawn up by the Sangh Parivar, the distinction between the academic agenda of a national-level academic organisation and the communal agenda of the Sangh Parivar has been obliterated."

Speaking to presspersons here, the eminent historian, Irfan Habib, said "there have been differences of opinion in the past, but the present Government has reduced all controversies to an

unacceptably low level."

On the view that the ideas "manufactured" by the Sangh Parivar ideologues, and rejected by reputed right-wing historians such as R. C. Majumdar, had found their way into the syllabus, Prof. Habib said the syllabus was not only anti-Muslim, but also reflected the regional and religious prejudices of the Sangh Parivar.

As proof of the regional bias, he said there was no mention of the Dravidian connection to the Harappan Civilisation, while a Vedic connection had been introduced.

Referring to the NCERT's contention that the new syllabus covered areas ignored by the one it seeks to replace, the NCERT's former head of the Department of Education in Social Sciences and Humanities, Arjun Dev, said no political unit of the Deccan and South, except the Rashtrakutas, find a mention in the syllabus of

Ancient India for Class XI. Even the Satavahanas, Pallavas, Chalukyas and Cholas do not find a place.

Challenging the NCERT's defence that an equal number of periods had been

given to Ancient and Medieval India, Prof. Habib said by clubbing the latter into three units, the Council had used an age-old trick to sideline a particular topic.

While the Delhi Sultanate had been classified as 'The Rise of Ghaznavis', the Mughal period had been "perfunctorily" mentioned under the rubric 'The Political Conditions'.

Not only had the Mughal rule been summarised — "with no mention of the political unification brought about by them" — this particular unit, according to the historians, included a host of dynasties, most of which had ceased to exist before the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate. Also, the idea of "resistance" had been introduced whenever the subject of study pertains to Muslim rule.

As for the varna system — a reference to which had been deleted from one of the existing textbooks — there was no mention of it before 300 B.C. in the Class XI syllabus for Ancient India. "The only reference to caste comes under the rubric 'Social Life as Reflected in Contemporary Literature from 200 B.C. to 300 A.D.'"

THE STATESMAN

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## MS-8 O for Octopus

THE MYSTERY of the secret syllabi has been finally revealed. And yet, the names of the eminences penning the new textbooks remain as mysterious as ever. Only after the books are out will the syllabi pass the test of objectivity. Even according to some members of the secretive NCERT think tank, no history can be written (or rewritten) hurriedly. The task becomes much more difficult when it concerns children's textbooks.

If a lot of muck has been raked, it is only fair that the NCERT has to shoulder a large part of the blame. Backdoor deletions from history books, which seemed kosher for decades, were crudely done without consulting the historians who wrote these books. It is no one's case that what they had written was faultless. History has to be continuously updated, but it has to be done in a transparent manner, after a rational debate.

Instead, what the nation witnessed was reckless distortion by saffron politicians and even demands for the arrest of the veteran historians. Clearly, the controversy was triggered off by the Union HRD minister (who compared the historians with Islamic terrorists!) and his servile acolytes in the NCERT. The objective was to whip up a sectarian agenda, perhaps with an eye on the forthcoming

elections. Credit must nevertheless be given to the NCERT for trying to lighten the burden on students and incorporating new science disciplines. But only time will tell how far the virtual abolition of history as a subject and the integration of social sciences will succeed in creating a new classroom ethos.

The reduction of the 20 chapters on medieval history into three smacks of the Hindutva paranoia with regard to Muslim rule in India. Contentious subjects such as 'the Vedic connection and legacy of Harappan civilisation... the material culture as described in the Vedas — political organisation, *sabha*, *samiti*, *rashtra*' etc., are bound to raise the hackles of less partisan historians. Dalits and tribals will undoubtedly object to the glorification of the *varna* system. If the entire exercise is to project myth as reality and that, too, according to the Hindutva manifesto, then it will be a direct attack on rationalist and modernist enlightenment. Ancient history seems to have become the pet obsession of the NCERT, as it is with the Sangh parivar. Besides, if the knowledge of contemporary terrorism and insurgency is considered useful for school students, then what about the hydra-headed octopus of fundamentalism, including that of the Hindutva variety?

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 JAN 2002

# NHRC notice to Centre on revision of textbooks

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callow

By J. Venkatesan

HD-9

NEW DELHI, JAN. 22. The issue of revision of textbooks for children has taken a new turn with the National Human Rights Commission issuing notice to the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the National Council of Education, Research and Training (NCERT) on the ground that such a change was likely to affect the rights of children.

23/1

The Commission issued notices, returnable in eight weeks, on the basis of a complaint from educationists alleging that the revision of textbooks was likely to adversely affect their (children's) development and might distort personality and human development.

The Commission held that "no doubt formulation of policies is within the domain

of the Government. However, the constitutional philosophy in the Preamble, the fundamental guarantees and the mandate of regulation of policy formulation by the Directive Principles of State Policy has to be respected".

The Commission also held that "the right to development is the most basic right of every child, duly recognised by the Convention on the Rights of the Child — to which India is a party".

The Commission also noted "that education has been judicially construed to fall within the guarantee of right to life in Article 21 and now it is a fundamental right. Freedom of information is the essence of democracy and education helps to develop that trait. It must, therefore, be also a medium of exposure to different points of views based on the depiction of established facts".

The Commission also observed that "it is the obligation of the school to disseminate all necessary information children require, facilitating them in making informed choices about their own lives".

The educationists wanted the Commission to intervene to look into the printing of history textbooks, which they felt was "undemocratic and non secular". In their opinion, the old textbooks should be continued for 2002 till historical reality and facts were brought into rewriting of history textbooks.

They also urged the Commission to ensure that the history textbooks writings were a truly transparent, professional and democratic process highlighting the secular, democratic, pluralistic character of India for which the freedom fighters had fought and died for.

# NCERT sticks to its text, but lightens<sup>22/11</sup> load

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: The new syllabi of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), officially released on Monday, may reduce the curriculum load on students, but there will be an increased emphasis on project-based work. While the syllabus for classes I to XII has been released, textbooks will be introduced in a phased manner, beginning with classes I, III, VI, IX, and XI by April.

The highlights of the new syllabi include integration of the social sciences at the secondary level, integration of technology with science, new subjects such as the 'art of healthy and productive living' for classes I to V, and the introduction of work education, art education, and health and physical education for classes VI to VIII.

The social sciences curriculum had become controversial about two months ago when the NCERT chopped certain portions from books authored by historians like Romila Thapar, Arjun Dev, Ram Saram Sharma and Satish Sharma. The historians had alleged that the "indiscriminate deletions" were motivated.

Just for the record, the new syllabus contains separate chapters on different religions and sects at the upper primary level (class VI to VIII). In keeping with the principle that the social science curriculum must be comprehensive yet not heavily loaded, the "laborious" details on the study of continents in

classes VI and VII have been axed. The focus, instead, is on India and its relations with the world. The NCERT also said that the attention which the Mughal emperors had enjoyed in history textbooks for far too long had been curtailed. Instead, the "neglected" regions of north-east and south India had found a place.

The need, said NCERT officials, was to study local historical developments in a broader countrywide and worldwide context. In classes IX to XII, the council has proposed a seminar or tutorial paper related to local history and culture.

"It is necessary to introduce the student to the elements of historical methodology, of how the historian works," the

syllabi states.

The council has tried to make the classroom experience more hands on. Consider this. Mock panchayats, visits to the offices of local government, discussions, organising campaigns, debates, poster-making and the like will be a part of the project activities specified at the end of each chapter of the social sciences.

Such comparative features as a study of the textile industry in Ludhiana and that in Texas will also be included. Such features, say teachers, may initially lead to adjustment problems, especially in terms of the dynamics of teaching and gathering information. The contemporary national scene and a world perspective also find place in the new syllabi. There is a strong focus on India in relation to the world.

## NEW LESSONS

- ▶ Reduction of curriculum load
- ▶ Emphasis on project-based work
- ▶ Integration of social sciences
- ▶ Study of various religions introduced

THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 JAN 2002

# UGC bans Slet from June 2002

Dinesh Joshi  
Bhopal, January 19

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TO REMOVE disparity in the eligibility criteria for the post of lecturers in universities and colleges, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has imposed a ban on the State-Level Eligibility Test (Slet) organised by various State Governments.

The ban would come into force from June this year. The decision was taken at a UGC meeting in New Delhi and the higher education departments of the States have been communicated about the decision. The Higher Education Department here has received a letter from the UGC in this regard.

The letter would soon be forwarded to the Professional Examination Board (PEB), which had been conducting Slet examination in the State. At present, as many as 15 State Governments, including Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, have the UGC's approval for conducting Slet.

These Slet-qualified candidates were eligible for lecturers' posts in universities and colleges at par with those clearing the NET.

This practice of conducting Slet was proving detrimental

to thousands of the NET-qualified candidates and, in many cases, the Slet-qualified candidates got preference over the NET pass-outs.

Apart from this, some States had agreed to accept the applications of the Slet-qualified candidates from other States, while the UGC regulations restricted the appointment of Slet pass-out candidates outside their States. The UGC was receiving complaints regarding deteriorating level of Slet examination process and incidents of copying was also reported from some states.

The Madhya Pradesh Government was conducting Slet for selective subjects and in a few departments only NET-qualified candidates were appointed as lecturers.

The State eligibility tests were started a few years back after many State Governments found their students were not able to clear the NET exams. These State mooted the proposal to conduct State-level eligibility tests for finding lecturers and, over the years, the number of State Governments holding Slet exams swelled to 15.

The UGC's decision to ban the Slet exams would protect the interests of many NET-qualified candidates.

CONFIDENTIAL



# NCERT presents please-all syllabus

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, January 10

THE NATIONAL Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has come up with a please-all history syllabus. In the modified syllabus, the story of India's past is taking into account all communities and all shades of political opinion.

A copy of the detailed course content from class 6 to 12 available with the *Hindustan Times*, speaks volumes for the impact that the preceding months of heavy attack has had on the NCERT.

The academic body has kept its promise of reducing the burden on students up to the Class 10 stage by clubbing history with geography, civics, economics and environment studies into single-

text reading on the theme 'Indian and the World'.

Till the mid-1970s, school students studied history as a stand-alone subject. Though it was subsequently taught from a separate text it formed just 30 per cent of social sciences. Now, responding to complaints from teachers and parents' bodies, the NCERT has recommended a thematic approach.

In the higher secondary (plus 2) stage, students who choose to pursue studies in history are to be given a bigger load. It is here that the NCERT's answer to the past few months of academic and political attack becomes apparent.

For instance, during semester 1 of Class 11, there is no mention of "Aryan invasion". In fact, Human Resource Development

Minister Murlu Manohar Joshi's promise of introducing students to India's contribution to world civilisation is subtly honoured.

Take for instance, the Vedic connection and legacy of Harappan civilisation. The extensive coverage in the course to mathematics and science from third to first millennium BC had raised Leftist academics' hackles. Under germination of high philosophy, a student will be exposed to the concepts of Brahma, Atma, Pran and other ethical concepts.

Medieval India covers all the dynasties that ruled Delhi and the syllabus appears to be sensitive to the allegations that artistic and architectural impact of Islamic dynasties would be ignored. South India has not been ignored.

The NCERT, realising the political minefield that it could create by debatable representation of modern India, has retained the old, Congress-focus in the story of the freedom movement. There is no explicit mention of the RSS in this segment, but whether or not its role will be tucked into the NCERT's text books under *Struggle for Swaraj (1919-47)* remains to be seen.

An NCERT source said the books are being written by reputed historians. But the names are being withheld as the authors had set a precondition that their identities will not be made public till the books are out some time in April.

"They don't want to be dragged into any sort of controversy," a senior NCERT official told *Hindustan Times*.

11 JAN 2002

# Talibanisation of education cannot be tolerated

The 62nd session of the Indian History Congress - India's premier body of historians - was held in Bhopal from 28 to 30 December. It sent the message loud and clear that the communalist onslaught on history and talibanisation of education must be checked at all costs.

In its first resolution passed almost unanimously, the IHC condemned the recent deletion of certain passages from the NCERT's history textbooks written by Romila Thapar, Arjun Dev, Arjun Dev, RS Sharma and Satish Chandra. This was allegedly done at the behest of the Union human resource development ministry.

"The IHC deplors the entire project of deleting important facts from history and inserting imaginary or mythological ones in the name of 'religious values'," stated the first resolution. "The practice of bans and proscriptions should be totally unacceptable in a free country, and can only be promoted by those who feel that open debate is not conducive to their own views of the past."

It underscored the point that India's image is being tarnished by such actions. The IHC slammed the Union HRD Minister Murlu Manohar Joshi for describing some top historians opposed to his mindset and ideology as "intellectual terrorists whose activities are more dangerous than trans-border terrorism" and proposing to get the textbooks approved by religious leaders.

The HRD ministry, according to the IHC, is clearly "encouraging a narrative of history which is at best speculative and often invokes mere belief and mythology rather than valid historical evidence".

A slew of the country's leading historians - including Prof Thapar, Prof Irfan Habib, Prof Sharma, Prof Bipan Chandra, Prof Satish Chandra and Prof Sumit Sarkar - have been up in arms against the National Democratic Alliance government's alleged bid to subvert history and communalise education.

They charge that the attempts to replace mainstream history with the Hindutva version would be disastrous for the discipline and the students. Prof Habib has described these attempts as "fascism and madness".

"History is not an arbitrary narrative where myth can override facts," says Prof Thapar, stressing that professional historiography requires a scientific methodology based on established historical evidence, critical inquiry and rigorous analyses.

Prof Habib says the deletion of passages from NCERT textbooks is an unprecedented move. "Even the British did not stoop to the level of deleting portions from history books that were critical of them during their regime".

**At the Indian History Congress session in Bhopal, India's top historians denounced the attempts to replace mainstream history with the Hindutva version. A resolution opposed the NCERT's new national curriculum framework for school education with emphasis on instruction in religion which is, it stated, ultra vires of the Constitution. MD. SHAHID PERVEZ reports**



Union Human Resource Development Minister Murlu Manohar Joshi: Drawing flak.

"The present BJP government is hell-bent on distorting history, fabricating established historical evidence and creating a grossly one-sided, biased version of history to suit its Hindutva agenda". The HRD ministry and its subordinate organisations like the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) are scared of any scientific and rational study of history - both past and contemporary. So, they have gone on to "invent" history, says Prof Habib. One reason why the Sangh Parivar and the HRD ministry are so preoccupied with inventing history, according to Prof Habib, is because they want to wipe out the historical facts that the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha had not played any role in the National Movement.

On the allegations levelled against Marxist historians of monopolising history and perpetuating the writing of history from their exclusive perspective, Prof Habib says all mainstream historians with secular credentials are dubbed Marxists by communalists who want to undermine the scientific and critical study of the discipline.

"There could be different schools of thought and their interpretations may also vary, but there cannot be any dispute about hard facts and valid historical evidence". The IHC

resolution also opposed the NCERT's new national curriculum framework (NCF) for school education with emphasis on "instruction in religion" which is, it stated, ultra vires of the Constitution and an attempt to promote "biased, selective history". It criticised the NCERT for not only dispensing with existing history textbooks from next year but also commissioning their rewriting by people whose names it has refused to divulge.

The move, it noted, does not augur well for the "quality and authenticity" of the new textbooks. It urged all non-CBSE educational authorities in the country to reject the changes in the curriculum and textbooks and adopt only such changes required by the need for updating them in a scientific and unbiased manner. Top historians consider the NCERT's new NCF and its proposal to abolish history as a separate subject up to the secondary stage "disturbing". They are equally concerned with its emphasis on "value education" and education about religion, and its promotion of Sanskrit, Jyotish and Vedic mathematics.

These designs, according to Prof RS Sharma, is aimed at "destroying the secular character of education". Others describe this move allegedly masterminded by the Sangh Parivar as a "pernicious exercise to promote communalism, obscurantism, and regional,

linguistic, and cultural chauvinism".

Several noted historians have dismissed as "preposterous" the claim made by Dr Joshi - in defence of the deletion of passages from the textbooks - that "young, impressionable children" should not be taught these controversial things. They have also criticised Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's bid to justify the changes in history syllabi. Prof Sarkar asks: "Is it the function of history to ignore all 'unpleasant facts' and become a collection of moral fables or happy tales, its contents dictated by 'religious' and/or 'community' leaders chosen by the Sangh Parivar for its political games?"

The teaching of history could surely not be done as in RSS schools where it is taught as a "catechism", says Prof Thapar. It is imperative for the advance of knowledge to deal with "conventional, controversial, and sceptical ideas" in a critical manner, says Prof Thapar.

Secular historians say communal ideology always exploits history for its justification and subjects it to "political abuse". This explains their obsession with history.

"The communal interpretation of history forms the core of communal ideology... Take this away and little would be left of the ideology," says Prof Bipan Chandra. These historians refer to the 1930's and 1940's when

Muslim communalists used history to validate the two-nation theory. In its desperate efforts to push the Hindutva agenda now, the Sangh Parivar has been engaged in doctoring and sanitising history, they allege.

They say the Sangh Parivar is engaged in tampering with history - right from foisting its, unfounded "pre-Harappa Saraswati valley civilisation" theory, to the baseless Hindutva version of the Aryans being indigenous inhabitants of this land, to neatly slicing Indian history into "Hindu" and "Muslim" periods and projecting them as "two monolithic communities in perennial conflict", to deleting the oppressive nature of the varna system, down to misrepresenting and twisting the historical events of the modern times.

None of these "fictional theories and wild stereotypes", according to them, are borne out by historical facts and evidence from archaeology and linguistics.

Prof Habib terms as "outrageous and absurd" the Union Home Minister, LK Advani's statement likening the Ayodhya movement to Mahatma Gandhi's "Dandi March". Significantly, in his address to the 61st Kolkata session of the IHC, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen had said history could easily become "bunk" through "motivated manipulation".

He said: "This is especially so if the writing of history is manoeuvred to suit a slanted agenda in contemporary politics. There are organised attempts in our country, at this time, to do just that, with arbitrary augmentation of a narrowly sectarian view of India's past, along with undermining its magnificently multi-religious and heterodox history. Among other distortions, there is also a systematic confounding here of mythology with history."

He had also said: "The incursion of sectarian orthodoxy in Indian history involves two distinct problems... 1/ narrow sectarianism, and 2/ unreasoned orthodoxy. The enterprise of knowledge is threatened by both." Expressing his fears over the controversy of rewriting our history, President KR Narayanan, in his message to the 62nd IHC session, said: "Our 'responsibility to facts'... must be paramount, regardless of their being bitter or sweet so that history is not abused for political or ideological purposes."

To drive home his point, he also quoted a "remarkable judgment" of Bombay High Court in 1967, which said, "To rewrite history, according to the views which are popular or which are necessary for bolstering nationalistic egotism or jingoism, is perversion of history".

(The author is The Statesman's Bhopal-based Special Representative.)

## British census online

THE 1901 census, carried out a few weeks after Queen Victoria's death, for England, Wales, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man was put online by the UK's Public Records Office on 1 January. www.census.pro.gov.uk contains details of 32 million individuals, including Charles Chaplin, Claude Monet and the Queen mother. British officials expected the effort would attract millions of visitors as access to its search options is free. They underestimated the interest it generated. Millions tried to log on to the site in its first three hours literally shutting out the site which could not take the overload strain. The 1901 census took place in the reign of Edward VII. Today, the same area has a population of about 53 million. In time, all their censuses right from the first one in 1841 will go online. At present, more servers are added to the site and it is operational. Visitors are requested to be patient to find out their family trees, as the site is still slow. Project manager Alison Webster said, "The census returns are our most popular documents and making them available on the internet means anyone can access information on their ancestors, the history of their house and their local area." The site is worth visiting to understand that this effort is as taxing and worthy as the census itself.

— SNS

## Endangered gorilla

The Western Lowland Gorillas, native of western Africa, are a highly endangered species and England's Bristol Zoo is trying to save it from extinction by assembling a breeding group - two females and a male - to help begin a family. There are only 90,000 animals left in the wild and this project is spearheaded by a European conservation programme run by the Frankfurt Zoo. http://www.bristolzoo.org.uk is among the most colourful zoo sites. For a deeper insight into all animals, including the gorillas, the place to visit is www.cam.ac.uk/cam/science/animals/zoo where one can watch live Webcast of animals from various zoos. www.panda.org/species/gorilla\_west gives the plight of the gorilla and the World Wide Fund for Nature's efforts to ensure they remain alive.

— SNS

## Dotcom's disaster report

FIVE hundred US Internet companies shut down or were declared bankrupt last year, more than doubling the dotcom mortality rate of 2000. 537 companies folded up in 2001 when compared to 225 the previous year bringing the total to 782 in the last two years. www.webmatters.com has a report from its analysts that said the shutdowns peaked between October, 2000, and June, 2001. The nine months accounted for three-quarters of all shutdowns. The report says the Darwinian process has left "many fewer weak Internet companies". The shutdown rate slowed down by the end of the year. November and December's 21 closures each made for the lowest monthly tally since August 2000.

— SNS

If you have interesting insights into the Net, or have discovered a great new site e-mail details to thestatesman@vsnl.com

There are many reasons why price differences may persist even with a single currency. The number of areas where one would expect the euro to lead to price convergence are few and far between, writes LEA PATERSON

# Euro will have little impact on prices

services within the eurozone will be sold at a single price?

In short, no, and a rash of recent surveys out of the eurozone illustrates just how different prices can be on the Continent. It is more expensive to rustle up a typical Italian meal in Germany than in Spain, for example, with customers in Frankfurt paying about 60 per cent more for a packet of spaghetti than those in Madrid.

And if you were tempted by a McDonald's Big Mac in Helsinki, you would be faced with a bill of euros 4.50 (£2.81), surveys suggest - twice as much as the euros 2.11 charged in Greece.

Many claim these price differences are only temporary, and that the advent of euro notes and coins will lead to an elimination of many such discrepancies in the coming months. Once consumers are able to see in black and white just how much costs vary between member-states, the presumption is that companies will be forced to bring their often widely differing prices into line.



A package of old coins of 12 European nations at a Beijing market on 28 December. The euro will be officially introduced in the 12 nations on New Year, - AP/PTI

Superficially, this argument seems persuasive. But, in practice, economic principles suggest the euro's impact on price disparities is likely to be relatively small. There are plenty of reasons why price differences may persist even with a single currency. Indeed, the number of areas where one would expect the euro to lead to price convergence are relatively few and far between.

The prevalence of price differentials under one currency is nothing new. As someone brought up in the north of England, but living in London, it is hard not to be aware of the wide differences in price that often exist within the borders of the UK.

A trip to a barber's shop in south-east London, for example, costs twice as much as back in Lancashire. And in my home town of Wigan, locally manufactured Uncle Joe's Mint Balls (a traditional children's candy) cost a fraction of the price of the same sweets sold in a capital delicatessen.

Why do these differences

exist? Tempting as it may be to blame price disparities on unscrupulous London merchants, the truth is that there are good competitive reasons why prices in the capital may be higher than those elsewhere. The relative scarcity of land in the capital means that shop rents are more expensive, while higher costs of living more generally (housing, transport and so on) mean that a London-based employer needs to be prepared to hand over relatively high salaries if he is to attract suitably qualified members of staff.

These two factors alone - higher shop rents and higher labour costs - explain away many of the price differences between the north and south. Differences in distribution costs are another important factor. So even if my local Greenwich delicatessen were supplying Wigan-made Uncle Joe's Mint Balls at the cheapest price it could, it would still have to transport the sweets down from the north. This is a cost that Lancashire-based retailers would not have to bear, a factor that naturally would be reflected in

the sweets' retail price.

The impact of differing supply costs is highly relevant to the debate over price convergence in the eurozone. I am no expert on Big Mac supply logistics, but it seems perfectly plausible that it is more costly for McDonald's to deliver to Helsinki than it is to Athens, and that the costs of operating in Finland (property, heating, lighting, labour costs) are higher than in Greece. As long as supply costs differ between member-states - be they labour costs, value added taxes, or distribution costs - prices will differ, single currency or no single currency.

Cost-related reasons are not the only reason why prices may vary within a single currency zone. There are also a host of uncompetitive reasons why prices may be higher in one member-state than another. Suppose, for example, that Company A is the sole supplier of spaghetti in both Spain and Germany and that customs regulations prevent consumers in both countries importing or exporting spaghetti from abroad.

Then Company A may find it profitable to charge a higher price in relatively well-off Germany than it does in the less affluent market of Spain.

The impact of euro cash on uncompetitive price disparities such as these is likely to be rather less than is commonly supposed. In the pre-euro cash world, our monopolist Company A would only be able to charge different prices in Germany and Spain if barriers to entry (for example, regulatory requirements) prevented rival suppliers from entering these markets and supplying spaghetti at a cheaper price. Post-euro, these hypothetical barriers to entry in the spaghetti market would still remain, and the price disparities would persist.

Economic principles tell us that there are only two sets of reasons why prices in one mem-

ber-state may vary from those in another. First, costs of supply (including taxes) may differ. And, second, uncompetitive market structures may allow companies to charge customers in different locations different prices for an identical good or service. The introduction of euro cash will have no impact on the former, and only a limited indirect impact on the latter - that is, if enhanced price transparency pushes member-state governments into improving the efficiency of their markets.

It would be wrong to assert that the cash changeover will have no impact on price convergence whatsoever. But the scope of this pit-cited benefit of euro entry is grossly overstated. Euro notes and coins may hammer home just how great price disparities can be within Europe, but the ability of the cash introduction to narrow this gulf is severely limited.

— The Times, London.

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4th Letter Triple						
G2	I1	I1	A1	N1	S1	S1
PAR SCORE 35-45						
by JUDD						
FOUR RACK TOTAL						
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN						
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RACK 1 = 92						
C3	U1	R1	F4	E1	W4	
RACK 2 = 22						
B3	O1	B3	L1	E1		
RACK 3 = 12						
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# Tenth Plan to focus on improving access to secondary schools

HRD-12  
By Our Special Correspondent

13/4  
**NEW DELHI, APRIL 16.** With the Centre hopeful of universalising elementary education within a decade through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and anticipating a consequent surge in demand for secondary education, the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has asked for four times the allocation of the Ninth Plan for this segment in the Tenth Plan.

As per the plan projections for secondary education in the Tenth Five Year Plan, Rs. 10,205.02 crores would be required to provide quality education to students entering the secondary fold in the coming years. This is a four-fold increase over the total expenditure of Rs. 2,400.82 crores incurred on secondary education in the Ninth Plan.

At present, two-thirds of the population in the age group eligible for secondary education is out of school. Given that the low attendance ratio and the high drop-out rate at the secondary level has been attributed to the lack of schooling facilities within a walkable distance, the thrust of the Tenth Plan proposals for this segment is on improving access.

According to statistics available with the Ministry, 15 per cent of the total habitations — covering 46 per cent of the rural population — is not covered by secondary education within a radius of 8 km. And, only 5.04 per cent of habitations with less than 18 per cent of the population has secondary schools within reach.

To facilitate access, a strategy that has been suggested by the Ministry pertains to using the guidelines given in the Unnikrishnan judgment on professional colleges, to put in place a regu-

latory framework where at least 30 per cent of seats shall be available to the disadvantaged groups from the school neighbourhood/local community. Other strategies that are being considered for broadbasing the secondary education network have been billed as the "patronage framework" and the "funding framework".

Under the "patronage framework," the proposal is to have the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) establish schools in partnership with voluntary agencies. "These schools, while remaining under the KVS umbrella may have private management representing parents and other stakeholders. Thirty per cent of admission into the schools may be given to the neighbourhood's economically weak students either with governmental support or through cross subsidisation."

The "funding framework," as per the HRD paper on "Strategies for secondary education in the Tenth Plan," envisages a scheme where the Government will provide a one-time grant or seed money to encourage reputed school systems to start schools with the mandatory reservation of 30 per cent of seats for the disadvantaged students from the neighbourhood.

Apart from seeking a higher allocation for secondary education, the Ministry has also decided to tap international funding agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. With the World Bank, the Ministry has already initiated a dialogue and has been informed that it would be interested in funding secondary education provided a comprehensive strategy was evolved.

# SC blow to NCERT 'saffron' syllabus

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, April 12

IN A major blow to the Government, the Supreme Court today dismissed its application seeking to vacate the stay on the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education (NCFSE), termed by many educationists as an attempt to "saffronise" school syllabi.

"The application is dismissed. The order passed on March 1, read with March 2, shall operate pending final disposal of the petition," the Bench

comprising Chief Justice SP Bharucha, Justice SV Patil and Justice HK Sema said.

Moving an application for vacation of the stay on behalf of the NCERT, Solicitor-General Harish Salve said the curriculum was approved after consultation with educationists.

On March 1, the court had stayed the implementation of NCFSE after it was challenged in a PIL filed by Aruna Roy, BG

Verghese and Meena Radhakrishna Tyabji alleging that an important decision to change school syllabi was taken without consulting the Central Advi-

sory Board on Education (CABE), an apex body set up to decide the national education policy.

The stay order said: "There shall be a direction to HRD Ministry, CBSE and NCERT not to implement the new curriculum without consultation with the CABE." The court had issued notices to the HRD Ministry, CBSE, NCERT and NHRC, while staying the implementation of the new education scheme.

The petitioners contended that the Government had tried to sideline the CABE, the apex body on education policy which

comprised of experts as well as Union Education Minister and education ministers of all the States.

The petitioners accused the Centre of "deliberately" not convening the CABE nor a meeting of the State Education Ministers though education was in the Concurrent List and the 1986 National Policy on Education provided for a better coordination between the Centre and States on the issue.

"The respondents have also deleted portions of existing text books without the permission of the concerned authors wherev-

er the portion was found to be opposed to the so-called 'religious sentiments' of some groups," the petition said.

The petitioners accused the Government of revising the syllabi for school education to orient the same "towards promotion of the political and religious ideology in favour with some sections of the Government".

"Deletions are purportedly made under the pretext that many incidents in History offend the religious sentiments of different sections of the people. Therefore, history is being rewritten," they said.

# SC rejects NCERT's plea to modify orders on curriculum

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, APRIL 12. The Supreme Court today rejected the plea of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to permit it to bring out new textbooks on Social Sciences, History and Hindi by modifying the court's earlier orders.

A Bench, comprising S.P. Bharucha, S.V. Patil and H.M. Sema, did not agree to the suggestion of the Solicitor General, Harish Salve, appearing for the NCERT and the Centre, that some of the textbooks, which had not been permitted, could be released if independent persons scrutinised them.

He also submitted that in the perception of the Government there was nothing objectionable whatsoever in any of the textbooks. He suggested that the petitioners could place their objections before independent person — like Sawant (retired judge of the Supreme Court) and the NCERT would as an interim measure, agree to delete any portion which Mr. Justice Sawant found objectionable. He also pointed out that there was no textbook on religion as submitted by the petitioners.

Mr. Salve further said that apart from large number of schools in India, there were many schools abroad which were affiliated to the CBSE and the ban on publication of books under the syllabus was affecting them much to the benefit of the private publishers who were wooing them to take books from them.

However, the Chief Justice said, "let me be very clear about it. The situation is entirely your creation."

When another senior counsel for NCERT, M.N. Krishnamani, intervened to say that the portions in the History books were deleted only on court orders, he said "no, there is something more to it".

Senior counsel for the petitioners, F.S. Nariman brought to the notice of the court a circular issued by the CBSE which said that the present textbooks would continue for the academic year 2002-2003, but the textbooks were not made available to the students.

Senior advocate, P.P. Rao, appearing for the CBSE, said if the cheap books published by the CBSE were not allowed to be released, the private publishers would make money by selling them at a higher price.

The Bench said "we are not going to permit the release of books under the new syllabus. The order passed on March 1 read with March 22 shall operate pending final disposal of the petition". The Bench said that the parties would be at liberty to mention the matter in July (after the summer vacation) before the First Court and seek an early date of hearing.

Passing interim orders on a public interest petition by Aruna Roy and two others, a three-judge Bench had on March 1 stayed the implementation of the new 'curriculum' from April 1. However, on March 22, the Bench modified the order and restricted the stay only in respect of textbooks relating to Social Sciences, including History and Hindi.

In its application for modifying the March 22 order, the NCERT submitted that the allegations of deletions from the History textbooks were totally misconceived as altogether a new set of textbooks had been written a set of authors and historians and based on the revised syllabus. No subject or aspect of the Indian society had been ignored or left out in these textbooks as alleged by the petitioners.

The NCERT further submitted that the earlier textbooks contained misrepresentations and facts had not only been presented selectively but also in a slanting manner which had created resentment and anger in certain sections of the society. Similar was the position in respect of Hindi textbooks and in respect of 'religion', the NCERT made it clear that there was no such subject at all for the schools.

Grave and irreparable prejudice and hardship would be caused to the NCERT, the CBSE and other respondents if the interim orders of March 1 and 22 were not modified, the application said and sought a direction to this effect.

12 APR 2002

THE HINDI



# NCERT curriculum: row over consultation

By Anita Joshua

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 11.** Now that the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) and its drafting process have been brought under the judicial scanner, NCERT's claim of "wider-than-ever-before consultations" is being challenged by several of those named in its "inclusive list of persons... consulted".

For, anyone who has been sent a copy of the NCFSE — journalists included, — is deemed to have been "consulted" in the reckoning of NCERT while finalising its new curriculum.

No doubt, copies were sent to the hundreds of persons named in the list, but the question that most of them are asking is whether distribution and a request for comments can be termed as "consultation" and portrayed as an alternative to the established consultative mechanism instituted in the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE).

The only advisory body of the Government in the field of education, the CABE, according to the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, — from which the new curriculum draws its very existence — "will play a pivotal role in reviewing educa-

tional development..."

In some cases, like that of Patricia Uberoi of the Institute of Economic Growth, no curriculum framework or syllabus was ever sent to her. Nor were her views ever sought on the curriculum framework. Prof. Uberoi had attended a workshop and delivered a lecture under the heading "curriculum revision" at the NCERT, but she said: "I didn't realise this made me a 'consultant' in the real sense of the word."

Upset over finding her name being attached to the curriculum framework with which she has had no association, Prof. Uberoi has filed a statement to this effect in the Supreme Court. And, she is not alone. At least seven others including the former Union Minister, M.G.K. Menon, the former Academic Director of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Kapila Vatsyayan, the former

Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Vibha Parthasarathy, and the eminent sociologist, T.K. Oommen, have filed similar statements in the Supreme Court.

They are just representative of the several listed individuals who insist that they have not been sent copies or consulted in the real sense of the term. Among those who have no recollection whatsoever of receiving a copy of the NCFSE (but are deemed to have been consulted) are the eminent economist, K.N. Raj, and JNU's Dipankar Gupta.

While Dr. Raj gave the NCERT the benefit of the doubt and said "my memory could be failing me", Dr. Gupta was absolutely certain that no copy was sent to him. According to Dr. Gupta, the NCERT had asked him to write a textbook on sociology. "That was a couple of years ago. I put forth my condi-

tions, and that was the last I heard from them."

Questioning the entire process of "consultation", the former NCERT Director, P.L. Malhotra — during whose term the NPE was finalised and the last curriculum revision undertaken — said he had been included in the list without ever being consulted. "They did send me a copy, but that is not consultation which has to be a two-way process."

According to Mr. Malhotra, the NCERT had ignored the established procedure while drawing up the curriculum.

"The States were not consulted in any formal manner. There is no difference in the level of 'consultation' the NCERT has had with the State Education Ministers and Education Ministers of other countries as even the latter have only been sent copies of the curriculum frame-

work.

THE HINDI

# SC permits NCERT to publish non-controversial books ✓

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, March 22. — The Supreme Court today allowed the National Council for Educational Research and Training to publish and sell all books for secondary education except those relating to history, religion and Hindi, which were allegedly changed in a bid to “saffronise” the education system.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice Mr SP Bharucha, Mr Justice SN Phukan and Mr Justice SV Patil accepted the plea of solicitor-general Mr Harish Salve that NCERT be permitted to publish books on non-controversial subjects. The 1 March court order had put a blanket ban on introduction of the new National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education (NCFSE). Acting on a PIL filed by Ms Aruna Roy and some others, the court had stayed the implementation of the controversial NCFSE books termed by many educationists as an attempt to saffronise school syllabi.

Appearing for the Centre, Mr Salve submitted that students would be placed in a disadvantageous position if the new curriculum was not allowed to be implemented. He said though the Centre did not agree with the allegations made in

the petition, it would request the court to allow publication of books on subjects like Physics, Mathematics and Science.

The modification of the 1 March came on two applications filed by the Centre and the NCERT seeking vacation of the stay while denying allegations of attempts to “saffronise” the syllabi. The Bench fixed 12 April for further hearing on the matter.

Appearing for the NCERT, senior advocate Mr KK Venugopal said out of the 34 lakh text books to be printed under the new curriculum, 25 lakh books have already been printed at a cost of Rs 4.5 crore. He said there were 100 other publishers and if they were also not restrained, their books would reach the market causing confusion among students.

Mr Venugopal said from 1 April students would start buying books for the new session. He sought lifting of the stay on printing of NCERT books. He suggested that the Court could give the option to the CBSE to either accept or reject the new curriculum.

The petitioners had alleged that an important decision to change school syllabi was taken without consulting the Central Advisory Board on Education which is the apex body on education policy.

Refuting this, both the Centre and NCERT said CAGE had become defunct since 1994 and was never reconstituted.

THE STATESMAN

23 MAR 2002

# SC stays implementation of NCERT's revised curriculum

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 1. The Supreme Court today stayed the implementation of the 'National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2000', formulated by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and duly approved by the Centre.

A three-judge Bench comprising the Chief Justice, S.P. Bharucha, Justice Shivaraj V. Patil and Justice B.P. Singh granted the interim stay on a public interest petition filed by social activist, Aruna Roy, columnist B.G. Verghese and sociologist, Meena Radhakrishna Tyabji, challenging the new curriculum.

The Bench also issued notice to the Union Human Resources Development Ministry, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the NCERT and the National Human Rights Commission returnable in two weeks.

The Bench said "there shall be a direction to the HRD Ministry, the CBSE and the NCERT not to further implement the new

curriculum without consultation with the Central Advisory Board of Education" (CABE).

When the Additional Solicitor, Mukul Rohtagi, appearing for the Centre requested the court not to pass any interim order and that he would come back with the response of the Union Government, the Bench asked whether he could give an undertaking that till the Centre responded, there would be no implementation of the new curriculum.

On behalf of the NCERT, senior counsel, M.N. Krishnamani, submitted that after 1992, the Government had not re-constituted the CABE.

However, a parliamentary committee submitted a comprehensive report on value-based education in 1999 and the revised curriculum was strictly in conformity with this report, he said. Even as both counsel sought time to get instructions, the Bench passed the interim order.

Arguing for the petitioners, senior advocate, Fali S. Nariman, said the Government had changed

the entire education policy without even consulting the CABE, which comprised of experts and State Education Ministers.

He submitted that the CABE was not consulted though the National Policy on Education had specifically stated that it ought to be consulted.

The petitioners submitted that the respondents had deleted certain portions of textbooks relating to beef eating, cow slaughter on grounds of religion and sought to introduce Vedic mathematics and Sanskrit as a compulsory subject.

They argued that such distortions in the textbooks would amount to religious propaganda, which would result in stultifying growth, development and the spirit of critical inquiry of children.

The petitioners sought a direction to strike down the revised curriculum; to hold that the deletions made in the textbooks were unreasonable and arbitrary and to direct the respondents to revise the syllabus in consultation with experts in a transparent manner.

THE HINDU

- 2 MAR 2002



# SC hearing against NCERT adjourned

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 22. The Supreme Court today adjourned to March 1 further hearing of a public interest writ petition challenging the 'National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2000', formulated by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and duly approved by the Centre.

A three-Judge Bench, comprising the Chief Justice, S.P. Bharucha, Justice Shivaraj V. Patil, and Justice B.P. Singh, asked the petitioners, Aruna Roy, social activist, B.G. Verghese, columnist, and Meena Radhakrishna Tyabji, sociologist, to amend their petition so as to "pinpoint what they are objecting to and why".

Adjourning the hearing to March 1, the Bench observed that the petition be amended properly so that "it looks like a writ petition and not an essay".

Arguing for the petitioners, the senior advocate, Fali S. Nariman, said the Government had changed the entire education policy without consulting the Central Advisory Board of Education, comprising mainly of State Education Ministers.

He submitted that after education had been put in the Concurrent List of the Constitution, whenever there had been any changes proposed in the educa-

tion policy, the Government had always consulted the Board.

The petitioners submitted that the textbooks being revised in conformity with the revised curriculum framework would not reflect the secular, democratic and pluralistic nature of the society and would prejudice the minds of young, innocent and impressionable children.

The revision in syllabi would result in deletions of various portions of the existing textbooks which threw light on the multicultural background of India. The revision had been carried out with an intent to present a lopsided view of the history and culture of India, far removed from reality, to further the ideology of a particular section of the society. It was completely arbitrary and a wide cross-section of academics, thinkers and intellectuals had expressed grave misgivings and serious apprehensions about the impact of such revision.

The petitioners sought a direction to strike down the revised curriculum; to hold that the deletions made in the textbooks were unreasonable and arbitrary and to direct the respondents to revise the syllabus in consultation with experts in a transparent manner and to continue the existing textbooks till the completion of the exercise.

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2002

## ICHR move to review manuscripts criticised

By Our Staff Reporter

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 8.** Two renowned scholars and historians — K.N. Panikkar and Sumit Sarkar — today denounced the Indian Council for Historical Research's (ICHR) step to review their manuscripts on "Towards Freedom" for the years 1940 and 1946. *for the 1940 & 1946*

Speaking to presspersons here, the two historians, who as a part of the ICHR's project — "Towards Freedom" — wrote the manuscripts and in 1995 submitted it to the project's general editor, S. Gopal, for review, said it had to come to their notice through newspaper reports that a three-member committee had been formed to review their manuscripts. *20 9 9/2*

Stating that this step was a violation of their special rights as authors, the two scholars said, "No alterations by way of deletion or incorporation or any other change suggested by the committee were totally unacceptable to them."

Expressing dismay over the ICHR's "mysterious step", Prof. Sarkar and Prof. Panikkar, who have also forwarded a protest letter to the ICHR, said they had been earlier informed that the manuscripts had been sent to the Oxford University Press for publication. "We are surprised that the ICHR has not published the volumes even after seven years of its submission."

Alleging that the reviewing of the manuscripts was against the understanding reached between them and the ICHR when they had undertaken the assignment, the historians said, "The ICHR has kept us in the dark about the steps they have been taking. We were neither informed nor consulted when the ICHR withdrew the manuscripts from the Oxford University Press."

THE HINDU

9 FEB 2001

# Curriculum War

## Growing Threat to Quality Education

By KRISHNA KUMAR

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THE news that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the NCERT coincides with the release of NCERT's long-awaited new syllabi for different stages of school education. It is ironical that a public body responsible for improving education faces the charge of jeopardising the human rights of India's children.

The petition placed before the NHRC questions the social philosophy of the national curriculum framework published earlier. It also questions the NCERT's decision to revise its own history texts by deleting certain portions. The NCERT has been saying that leaders of religious and caste communities should be consulted for preparation of history texts, and that historical facts which might hurt community sentiments should be dropped. The petition admitted by the NHRC alleges that this modus operandi clashes with the idea of democracy on which the constitution is based.

In the notice it has served to the NCERT and the HRD ministry, the human rights commission uses the premise that education is a universally acknowledged human right which the constitution now treats as a fundamental right. Education contributes to democracy, the notice argues, by exposing children to different points of view and by imparting to them the intellectual means to make informed choices. Having defined the role of education in this way, the NHRC's notice proceeds to argue that the idea of education as a human right entails the responsibility to direct education towards the aims that make it an experience worthy of being called a human right. Thus, the allegation that the NCERT's new curriculum policies may distort children's perspective and thereby affect their intellectual development in an adverse manner falls within the NHRC's purview of inquiry.

This may sound strange, but the NHRC's notice opens up an inquiry that has never been formally done in the history of our education system. For a long time after Independence, the aims and substance of education were taken for granted, and the need to debate them did not arise. Perhaps the memory of the freedom struggle and the moral authority of Gandhi and Nehru were enough to orient every sphere of state policy. Institutions like the NCERT were set up in that ethos of tacit consensus and

faith. For a while its activities carried the imprint of that ethos, but as time went by, both that imprint and the professional calibre of the NCERT's work started to fade.

Over this last decade, many national institutions of the Nehru era have shown evidence of professional and moral breakdown in the face of ruthless politicisation. The collapse of academic culture and the spread of corruption into every aspect of institutional life are the inevitable consequences of unrelenting politicisation. When this happens, ideas and reasoning are banished; a new culture of patronage and crookedness takes over. Education ceases to be a remedy for social evils.

The recent months have given plenty of evidence to suggest that curriculum planning in India now poses the biggest organised threat to children's mental health. The discussions held on the national curriculum framework and the

### IN BRIEF

- NHRC's notice to NCERT will open up an inquiry into the very aims and substance of education
- There should have been a wider consensus before framing the new syllabi
- Knowledge that would make the child aware of India's commitment to liberalism appears to have been marginalised

controversy over history texts show that there is no room left now for policy to proceed in a rational way. Neither the HRD ministry, nor the NCERT are ready to work within the norms of democratic, accountable functioning. Both by statute and by convention, the ministry was obliged to call a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) to ratify the 'national curriculum framework'. No document can legitimately be called 'national' without such ratification; yet, the NCERT has gone ahead without it to prepare and distribute the new syllabi, and it now says that fresh textbooks are under preparation. Forget about the speed of this operation (which other country gives two months to publishers for bringing out new texts?); the determined disregard for laid-down procedure and norms is worrying.

To those who have given up these debates in despair, the NHRC's notice might bring some

relief. That there is scope for a statutory inquiry into the charge that the NCERT and the HRD ministry pose a threat to our children's human rights creates an unprecedented situation. It demands that the NCERT be restrained from disseminating the new syllabi and the preparation of new textbooks. The case against it must be heard and disposed of first. Meanwhile, a review panel should be appointed to look at the new syllabi.

Given the erosion of professional standards in the NCERT, the quality of the new syllabi should cause no surprise. There is no sign of a psychological or epistemic principle to link the different stages of school learning. In the syllabus of every subject, you find evidence of mindless tinkering with the existing choice and ordering of topics. Social studies are the worst case where ideology takes strident precedence over concern for the child's growth as an organising principle. Behind the mask of value-education and nation-building, the NCERT marginalises every item of knowledge that might make children aware of India's commitment to liberal, democratic values. Of course, there is no dearth of lip-service to the constitution, but the content proposed for teaching leaves us in no doubt that the NCERT either does not understand or it does not agree with the basic premises of the constitution.

Most ironical of all is the NCERT's claim that these syllabi will lighten the child's burden. The obvious reference is to the Yashpal committee's report about which I know a little because I was a member of that group. Our report said that the problem of curricular burden arises from poor organisation of syllabi and incomprehensibility of textbooks. The new syllabi give every reason to apprehend that the burden our children face is going to increase further. In place of psychological or epistemic grounds for selection of topics, the new syllabi use ideology as an overarching principle. Plenty of jargon has been used to conceal this, but even in this the NCERT shows little skill. Imagine this heading in Unit 1 for Class X social studies: 'Towards the New World: Development of Fascism and Nazism'. The sub-unit proceeds to include nationalist movements in Asia and Africa, and World War II, but it is hard to come to terms with the fact that the NCERT believes fascism to be a prime force of change in the 20th century.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 FEB 2002

# Amartya warns against politicising school texts

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, January 4

THERE IS a danger of some political groups manipulating the educational content and curriculum in schools for subversive purposes, which will harm human security, said Nobel laureate Amartya Sen here today.

Sen was speaking after the completion of a two-day workshop on "Education, Equity and Human Security" held in the city. The workshop was jointly organised by Unicef, Pratichi Trust, Harvard University and the Commission on Human Security.

The commission, an independent body set up by Unicef is examining the relationship between human security and education. It will begin a study in South Asia on the subject soon.

Sen, who co-chairs the Commission with Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said he "couldn't agree with the Hindutva forces on their stress on religious education and changing the curriculum".

The Commission's press release has voiced Sen's apprehensions. "The content of the education matters. Openness of the curriculum and a secular and inclusive approach that cultivates reasoning and scrutiny can be central to the role of education to promoting human security," it states.

The belief that only religion is the route to self-realisation negates India's agnostic tradition. "For many, religion is not the driving force. The Hindutva forces present a narrow view of Indian culture. This will lead to misunderstandings. We need to protect secularism as enshrined in the Constitution," Sen said.

Sen said free primary education was no longer free. "A survey by Pratichi Trust suggests that quality of elementary education has declined. While the rich repair their children's education by spending on private tuitions, the poor suffer."

He advocated reducing the incentive that rich students get



ASHOK NATH DEY/HINDUSTAN TIMES

Amartya Sen speaks at a workshop on education in the city on Friday.

in primary schools. "There is need to give voice to parents from disadvantaged sections, such as Dalits. A participatory education model needs to be established with stress on increased parent-teacher interaction."

The Commission will deal with insecurity generated from lack of elementary education. As a first step towards this, nearly two-dozen economists and policy planners collected in the city to develop strategies for the study.

"Illiteracy is linked with economic deprivation in an age of knowledge-based economies. The uneducated are ignorant of their rights, particularly illiterate women," the Commission's press release stated.

Education can empower women by increasing their voice in family decisions, which in turn reduces child mortality and fertility rates and improves overall family health.

Sen said India needed to increase expenditure on education from 3.8 per cent of the GDP to six per cent. The Commission welcomed the recent Supreme Court ruling asking schools to give mid-day meals to students.

"India has more undernourished people than even Sub-Saharan Africa. This move will address that to an extent," he said.

Human security is as important as national security or security from terrorism. "Nearly 3,500 people were killed in the September 11 attacks. More than that number died of AIDS and malaria on that day," said Sen.

The members of the Commission spoke to representatives of Bangladesh. State Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta participated in the discussion.

The Commission will make specific suggestions for improving education in the State in 2003 after the survey.

# History and community sentiment

By Rajeev Bhargava

*The history textbooks from which selected portions are deleted do not condemn the way of life of any community... They do, however, discourage a deferential attitude... This is how it should be.*

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**I**S THE decision of the NCERT to remove sections it deems objectionable justified? Can a particular section of a school textbook be deleted on the sole ground that it hurts the sentiment of any community?

To answer this, I identify at least three assumptions that underlie this decision. First, that the communal identity of persons is the only one they have. Second, that sentiments are naturally given, unalterable and cannot be morally evaluated. Third, that respecting a person or community always implies overlooking defects, refraining from being critical. Since each of these assumptions can be challenged, the decision of the NCERT is unwarranted.

British colonial writing never conceived India as a nation but instead saw it as an adhoc conglomeration of several discrete communities. In addition, these communities were seen not as rational agents but only as subjects of feelings. Individuals, on this view, saw themselves solely as members of sentimental communities, with no reflective powers to distance themselves from their community or be able to challenge practices they found unbearable. The NCERT replicates this Orientalist view and simply grafts it on to modern India today. It thereby perpetuates a deeply offensive picture of India self-consciously and painstakingly fought against by the movement for Independence. More importantly, this picture is plainly wrong. I doubt that a society has ever existed in which all its members defined themselves exclusively in terms of the community to which they were attached. Almost always, at least some people in society possess the capacity to reflectively endorse or challenge the practices of their community. This is true too of India in the 18th and 19th centuries. Could our great social reformers such as Gandhi or Phule have achieved anything if they had always worried about the sentiments of religious communities? Could improvements in the life of religious communities have been possible if religious reformers such as Guru Nanak, Dayanand or Vivekananda looked over their shoulders to see how their actions distressed the feelings of orthodox religious leadership?

The decision-makers at the NCERT may respond to this by saying that they are not making mutually exclusive claims. Individuals can belong to a particular community

and yet see themselves independent of it. Likewise, individuals can simultaneously be rational and emotional. The point, they might say, is that even rational individuals have feelings. Though mostly rational, Hindus have sentiments too which are hurt when told that their ancestors ate beef. So do Sikhs when they read that Guru Tegh Bahadur indulged in plunder.

This is all very well but embedded in the NCERT response are three further assumptions. First, that emotions, quite like sensations, are biological perturbations that occur within us, not collectively generated entities for which we are responsible. Second, once triggered, there is no easy way to control them. All counter strategies to deal with powerful emotions are therefore impotent. Even the persuasive powers of reason are annulled. An emotion is like pain. It cannot be expunged by rational talk. Third, what is beyond our control is also outside the ambit of rational or moral evaluation. If we, conscious agents, are mere receptors of feelings that just happen to us and that spring from sources outside reason, then they can neither be rational nor irrational, neither be good nor bad. Does it make sense to say that our inability to fly is irrational or that our mortality is immoral? We may regret that we are finite creatures, but surely we cannot say that there is something wrong about it. These are just plain facts about us, beyond reason, beyond good and evil. It is the same with feelings. We cannot rationally assess or morally evaluate them. Because they overwhelm us, we are entirely passive in relation to them. It is best then to give in to emotions and bow before the much stronger sentiment of collectivities.

This conclusion is false because the assumptions from which it flows are mistaken. Most human emotions are socially constructed. We are not biologically programmed to be indignant about injustice. Many, such as shame and guilt, are culturally specific. Almost all emotions are amenable to rational assessment. If someone says he had a pang of regret, it is perfectly

legitimate to ask if he was justified in having it. If someone is angry, it is entirely appropriate to ask if that anger is reasonable. This is so because like beliefs and unlike sensations, emotions have an intentional content. They are always about something. As with any mental entity with a content, it is always legitimate to ask if emotions fit or cohere with the world. Emotions, like beliefs, can be shown to be false or unreasonable.

Take an example. Suppose that I am angry because I believe my low grades are due to a deep bias against my caste. If, on closer examination, a bias shows up in the pattern of marking, for instance, if other members of the same caste have secured poor marks, then my anger seems to be justified. If not, then it is unfounded. Surely, others can expect me to shed my anger and to accept my just desserts. Emotions can change by rational persuasion.

Just as emotions are rational or irrational, they can be moral or immoral too. It is not exactly moral to feel bad about the legitimate success of others. It is certainly morally wrong to gloat at the misery of others. We discourage children from being jealous or envious because such emotions harm them as well as others. Emotions then are not mere eruptions independent of our beliefs, judgments and appraisals. It is legitimate to ask if resentment is rationally endorsed and morally justified. If it is not, it is best to drop it, even if difficult.

However, those who favour these deletions may reply that Hindus and Sikhs have good reason to be offended, that their resentment is morally justified because these statements are unambiguously false. And who will decide the truth and falsity of these statements? The community, of course, they would answer, and Truth is what the community says it is. This relativist position is plainly unconvincing. Though there are no absolute, final, un-revisable truths, it is humanly possible to arrive at beliefs which, given available information, it is most reasonable to hold. This is so in social science and history as

much as in the natural sciences.

The cognitive content of feelings of hurt and resentment must then be assessed by procedures of sound and valid arguments and broadly acceptable standards among historians by which good from bad interpretations of available historical evidence can be distinguished. If so, what is included or jettisoned from history textbooks must be decided by or be consistent with the judgments of professional historians. Has the NCERT consulted relevant historians? If the moral legitimacy of sentiments depends, as far as is reasonably possible, on the best available interpretation of evidence, the validity of arguments and on the plausibility of historical accounts, then the judgment of historians is relevant to whether or not feelings of hurt and resentment are justified.

The NCERT can furnish a further, desperate argument: some statements, even if true, must be removed if they offend the self-esteem of any community. Is it not the case that sometimes truth hurts, lowers self-respect or our respect for others? Will our respect for a person not be diminished when we hear something true but disagreeable, distasteful or nasty about him? Not necessarily. We do not lose respect for parents or friends even when we recognise their failings. This, primarily because we also know of their strengths and virtues that far outweigh their known faults.

Respect is consistent with criticism, and with a recognition of some defects. So is love. Criticism, however, is incompatible with blind submission, subordination and deference. The acknowledgement that our ancestors did something of which we now disapprove should not necessarily diminish our respect for them. We lose respect only when nothing worthwhile is found in their way of life. Similarly, disrespect towards religious communities is shown only when their entire way of life is condemned, not when a few of their practices are criticised. To my knowledge, history textbooks from which selected portions are deleted do not condemn the way of life of any community. Therefore, they show no disrespect for religion. They do, however, discourage a deferential attitude. Because good critical education is incompatible with deference, this is how it should be.

(The writer is Professor, Political Theory, Delhi University.)

THE HINDU

- 2 JAN 2002