

Number of girls at school on rise

NEW DELHI:

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**AREAS OF CONCERN** Total enrolment in primary classes has dipped as has enrolment of ST students

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**NEW DELHI:** The latest government data on education has finally brought some cheers. Gender discrimination in Indian schools, according to the statistics, is reducing. But the total number of students in primary school has dropped and government school teachers are increasing being poached by private schools.

Girls, Muslims and scheduled caste (SC) students represent an increasing proportion of the country's school-going population, the statistics prepared by the National University for Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) for the human resource development ministry show.

But the data, which will be released by HRD minister Kapil Sibal on February 1, earmarks areas of concern too on a day

the Republic turned 62. These concerns stand out as the government pushes towards universalisation school education through the Right to Education Act.

The fraction of girls enrolled in primary school has increased from 48.38% in 2008-09 to 48.46% in 2009-10. The fraction of girls in classes VI-VIII has increased from 47.58% in 2008-09 to 48.12% in 2009-10. The percentage of SC students in classes I-VIII has increased from 19.72% in 2008-09 to 19.81% in 2009-10. The total fraction of scheduled tribe (ST) students in classes I-VIII has reduced, though the percentage of ST girls has increased.

The fraction of Muslims in primary school has also significantly increased from 11.03% in 2008-09 to 13.48% in 2009-10, and in classes VI-VIII from 9.13% to 11.89%. "The improving gender parity, and increased

enrolment of SCs and other communities like Muslims shows that classrooms are becoming more representative and inclusive," professor Arun Mehta of NUEPA, who led the study told HT.

The statistics however have also flagged areas of concern.

The total enrolment in primary schools has dropped from 134377324 in 2008-09 to 133405581 in 2009-10, even as the country implements the Right to Education Act that aims to put every child between 6 and 14 in school. Children are also increasingly shifting from government to private schools. Enrolment in government schools dropped by 32 lakh between 2008-09 and 2009-10, while private schools witnessed an almost identical hike in enrolment over the same period.

The statistics also suggest a similar exodus of teachers from government to private schools.

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