

Some basic lessons needed

Hurray! The outlay for education has been increased by 31.5 per cent. The government loves to play the 'daatha' (donor), but the ground reality rests with God. First of all, what does this mean in terms of GDP deployment?

Secondly, I think we need much more transparency of data. Does this additional allocation of Rs 24,115 crore include or exclude the education cess and the promise of Rs 8,000 crore under the new scheme — Prarambhik Siksha Kosh?

Thirdly, how do we understand this allocation in terms of requirement? We must know the need, before rejoicing over the huge al-



location. Not to be cynical, but only to be realistic. Obviously, everyone is talking about outlays and outcomes. In education, it means outcome — the learning levels. How much will the allocation translate into learning for the child?

Great to know too that 1.5 lakh teachers are to be appointed. Here again, we need to look at the competency of teachers who are recruited so that the ultimate aim is realised. How do you achieve this unless our teacher training institutes are quality driven?

The FM has also proposed to start five lakh classrooms. Excellent, considering many of our children continue to sit under trees and learn their lessons. But, the reality is different. Implementation of school infrastructure is riddled with red-tapism. How can we ensure more accountability?

The budget appears to be silent on enabling our chil-

dren with technology which will ultimately reduce the burden on the state governments. There is a need to create the next generation of learners to ensure that the funds we have pumped in don't go down the drain.

And then there is little for the levels from secondary education to degree. The scheme for girls' education is comforting, but it may be only a drop in the ocean.

It is heartening, indeed, to note the thrust on primary education, but let's not forget that this stage is the dipping point. And when we are at a dipping point, let's make sure we don't fall off.