

**17 NOV 2000**

# **Plan for universal primary education**

**By Our Special Correspondent**

**NEW DELHI, NOV. 16.** The Government has planned a major initiative to achieve universal primary education over the next seven years under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme.

The scheme envisages community-owned schools in which all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years would be enrolled by the year 2003 to complete four to five years of schooling by the year 2007.

A national-level mission under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, is being set up with the Human Resource Development Minister, Dr. M.M. Joshi, as the vice-chairman. States are being advised to set up state-level missions.

This step is expected to help the Government fulfill the constitutional obligation of providing free and compulsory education to all

children between the ages of 6 and 14 years.

A significant difference between this scheme and the previous attempts to push universal primary education is the idea of community-owned schools. This would make those who run the schools as well as the teachers directly responsible to the community they serve. The Government also plans a special push in areas where female illiteracy is significantly high.

Another difference would be that the Centre would provide 85 per cent financial help to States during the Ninth Plan period, bringing this down to 75 per cent later, but continuing it with at least 50 per cent thereafter.

Finally, these schools are to be integrated with the Panchayati Raj institutions and autonomous tribal councils, making the local elected bodies directly responsible for running them effectively

**ED1**

**UEE**