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Ministry Plans to Strengthen Government Schools, Slash RTE Cost

By Rashmi Belur | Published: 25th November 2015 05:20 AM Last Updated: 25th November 2015 05:20 AM

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BENGALURU: The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is working on improving government schools in the backdrop of state governments having to reimburse several crores to private schools under the RTE Act.

According to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009), 25 per cent of the seats in private schools are reserved for students from economically backward sections. While the students admitted under the Act get free education, the state government pays a stipulated amount as reimbursement to the schools.

The ministry has started discussions in this regard following representations made by several states, including Karnataka. Replying to an MLC's question at the ongoing session, Primary and Secondary Education Minister Kimmane Rathnakar said, "The HRD ministry has formed a committee and three rounds of meetings at high levels have been held. A decision will be out by the first week of January."



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Though the RTE Act was enacted in 2009, it was implemented in Karnataka in 2010-11. Since then, admissions at state government schools has dipped by 13 per cent. As per available statistics, the number of admissions to Class 1 at government schools during 2011-12 came down to 5,41,889 from the previous year's 6,20,485. On the other hand, there is a substantial increase in admissions in private schools.

Year	Govt	Pvt
2010-12	6,20,485	3,98,992
2011-13	5,82,775	3,99,952
2012-14	5,72,287	4,60,491
2013-15	5,41,889	4,92,479

People have misunderstood that HRD is considering withdrawing RTE Act. There is no such proposal. Only a committee has been formed to strengthen government schools to attract students.

— **May 9th**, Principal Secretary to Primary and Secondary Education Department

Sources said, along with Karnataka, Rajasthan and Maharashtra have also raised the issue. "We have proposed strengthening of government schools instead of paying crores to private schools in the name of reimbursing RTE fees," said an official.

According to the Primary and Secondary Education Department, ever since the RTE Act was implemented in the state, they have paid `368 crore to private schools towards reimbursement. This amount is expected to double in the coming years.

As per the statement of the minister himself, Karnataka will have to pay `1,200 crore in the coming years. "This will be a financial burden on the state government," said Rathnakar.

Commenting on the state government's move, educationist V P Niranjanaradya said, "Private schools must not expect money from the government. They must provide 25 per cent seats to RTE students as part of their social responsibility.

D Shashikumar, General Secretary, Karnataka Associated Management of English Medium Schools said, "Though the state government is giving out reimbursement figures, the schools have not received it properly. Let them strengthen government schools. I feel RTE will face a natural death over the years."



No Drop in Kerala, Tamil Nadu



The situation in Kerala and Tamil Nadu is not the same as Karnataka, as they state governments focus on filling all the seats in government schools before recommending students to private schools. They also do not insist about students getting admitted in any particular school in the village or area.

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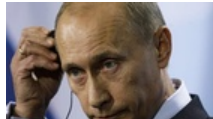
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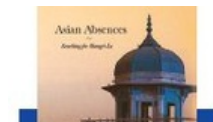
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