

## The Hindu

Edition: coimbatore Clip Date: 14-September-2006 Page No: 5 Column: TamilNadu Clip Ht/Wt: 24cms / 23 cms

# A school with no homework!

## Isha Vidhya Matriculation School seeks to empower rural children

Subha J Rao

**COIMBATORE:** Some children skip about merrily in the well-lit corridors, others admire their new uniforms and a whole bunch outside enthusiastically tries out the jungle gym. This is the first batch of students of Isha Vidhya Matriculation School that seeks to empower rural children with quality education.

The school in Santhegounden Palayam near Ikkarai Boluvaampatty is the first of 206 proposed to be started in Tamil Nadu in the next five years as part of the Isha Education Outreach programme.

The kids come from myriad backgrounds: some have studied in matriculations schools while others come from panchayat schools. Interestingly, this diversity does not show in the way the kids interact.

### Qualified resource

Krishnan Venkatraman, Correspondent of the school and Project Coordinator, Isha Education Outreach, says the school was started with the aim of sustaining qualified resource. "No other country has such qualified population. But, quality education is yet to reach them. The scope is limited in language-based education. Here, the children are trained in English and exposed to computers," he says. A school bus picks up 210 of the 265 children on the rolls, drawn from 20 villages in a 10-km radius.

Will being educated in a school where they are allowed to blossom at their own pace set them apart from their neighbourhood peers who study in traditional schools?

"No. We want to create a situation where there is no comparison. A student must compete only with himself. Each one has different skills. Any comparison will be akin to finding similarities between an apple and orange," observes Mr. Venkatraman.



**SOUND EXPOSURE:** The Azim Premji Foundation has created computer-based teaching aids in English, Tamil and Hindi at the school. - PHOTO: M. PERIASAMY

Parents have also come around to their kids studying in a school where no homework is given and the only thing they carry to school is the lunch bag.

There will be no formal examination system, just assessment. Even that will take place without the child ever realising it, he adds.

Currently, the school has a kindergarten section and Classes I and II. They plan to add a

class every year. Also, to ensure that the children grow to their full potential physically, the school hands out health supplements on alternative days. This is made of a variety of nuts, dates and coconut. It hopes to have a kitchen to ensure that students get enough nutrition.

Though education is the major focus, holistic development is what the school hopes to achieve.

And, imagination is encouraged. The boards in the school take on the shape of elephants, butterflies and leaves. But, no drawing is complete. "That is to allow them to imagine. Each mind works differently. This will encourage that."

### Karadi tales

The children also learn using computers and Karadi tales and rhymes. The Azim Premji Foun-

ation has created computer-based teaching aids in English, Tamil and Hindi.

"What the children get with all this is immense confidence. From shy kids they have transformed into those who can walk up to anyone and talk. When I recently went on leave, they thought little before coming up to me wondering why I was absent," laughs R. Pushpavalli, principal.