



India launches children's right to education



Millions of Indian children remain out of school

A landmark law which makes education a fundamental right for children has come into effect in India.

It is now legally enforceable for every child to demand free and elementary education between the ages of six and 14 years.

Indian PM Manmohan Singh said enough funds would be made available to ensure that children had access to education.

An estimated eight million children aged between six and 14 do not currently attend school in India.

Mr Singh said that the government was committed "to ensuring that all children irrespective of gender and social category have access to

education".

Recalling his own childhood, Mr Singh, a qualified economist, said: "I read under the dim light of a kerosene lamp. I am what I am totally because of education."

"So I want that the light of education should reach to all," Mr Singh added.

'Building block'

Analysts say the law marks a historic moment for India's children.

"It serves as a building block to ensure that every child has the right to guaranteed quality elementary education. The state, with the help of families and communities, has a legal obligation to fulfil this duty," said Karin Hulshof, India representative of UN children's fund Unicef.

Recently, the World Bank announced two education projects worth a total of \$1.05bn for India - one of which is to boost the number of children enrolling in and completing elementary school.

The World Bank says the number of children reportedly enrolled in elementary education in India increased by 57 million to 192 million between 2003 and 2009.

More than two-thirds of this increase took place in government schools. The number of children out of school declined from 25 million to 8.1 million during the same period, the World Bank says.