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PUBLISHED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES

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Delhi on top, Bihar at bottom

The Asian Age India | Sanjay Basak

New Delhi: It's in Delhi where the Congress-led UPA government is spending the maximum amount per person on human Resources development, while the lowest expenditure is in Bihar. Repeated attempts by a group of educationists to draw the attention of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi to this "glaring regional imbalance" have had no effect so far. The Prime Minister had recently gone on record saying: "I trust our government as well as the state governments evolve policies to remedy regional imbalances."

A preliminary report prepared by Prof. Chitta Boral of Arizona University "State-wise distribution of HRD national highways funding in India" goes on to show that while the government spends Rs 177.12 per person in Delhi, the amount per head in Bihar is just Re 1.87. The phrase "national highways" in this case is actually a reference to higher educational institutions. It explains: "Although these institutions theoretically allow equal access to students from all states, like national highways being used by people, students in a state where a particular institution is located have more awareness and more access to it as it is more convenient to them. In fact, the national highways are more evenly distributed in the country than the educational institutions." Highlighting the "glaring disparity", a statewise breakup of the funding of higher education is given below:

The report goes on to show that the Centre was spending Rs 177.12 per person in Delhi, while it was Rs 105.42 in Uttaranchal, Rs 105 in Arunachal Pradesh, Rs 77.12 in Assam, Rs 33.78 in Himachal Pradesh, Rs 28.10 in West Bengal, Rs 25.12 in Karnataka, Rs 17.79 in Tamil Nadu, Rs 17.09 in Maharashtra, Rs 17.08 in Uttar Pradesh, Rs 16.20 in Jharkhand, Rs 16.05 in Andhra Pradesh, Rs 14.50 in Jammu and Kashmir, Rs 13.38 in Punjab, Rs 8.52 in Himachal Pradesh, Rs 7.90 in Kerala, Rs 7.39 in Chhattisgarh, Rs 7.20 in Madhya Pradesh, Rs 4.87 in Gujarat, Rs 4.07 in Orissa, Rs 2.59 in Rajasthan and Rs 1.87 in Bihar.

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Delhi, the report notes, has a large number of higher educational institutions: besides Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, there is the Indian Institute of Technology, Jamia Millia Islamia, AIIMS, the School of Planning and Architecture and IGNOU.

Over the past few months, a group of educationists in India and abroad have been writing to the Prime Minister and Mrs Sonia Gandhi over the "regional imbalances" in education in the country. Digambar Patra, of the department of physics of Waseda University, Tokyo, stated that the educationists had also organised an email protest campaign over the issue. Of them, Prof. Chitta Boral received an acknowledgement of his letter from Mrs Gandhi. The letter was, incidentally, addressed to the Prime Minister, with a copy marked to Mrs Gandhi.

Besides referring to the disparity between states in higher educational institutions, the letters also referred to the "stepmotherly" attitude towards Orissa. There have been a lot of protests over the UPA government's move to ignore former HRD minister Murli Manohar Joshi's plan to set up a National Institute of Science in Orissa. The Centre has reportedly decided to shift the project to "friendly" states like West Bengal and Maharashtra, ruled by the Marxists and the Congress respectively.

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