

# One lakh schools constructed before '08 to get toilets

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The Centre has directed its focus on sanitation in schools, with an inter-ministerial panel deciding to construct toilets in one lakh schools that lack the facility.

The schools to be targeted by sanitation drive were constructed before 2008. The toilet facility be-

came a compulsory part of educational institutions over the last few years. A coordination committee, comprising ministries of rural development, HRD, panchayati raj, social justice, women and child development and health, has decided to pump in new funds to achieve the target.

The focus on schools, aimed at providing hygienic environment

to children, would also seek to construct toilets in one lakh anganwadi centres. Since these educational and childcare bodies fall under the ambit of states, the Centre plans to coordinate with local governments.

Besides schools, the Centre has set an ambitious target of ending the use of 'dry latrines' that leads to the dehumanizing prac-

tice of manual scavenging. The latest Census has found 15 lakh dry latrines are still in use. A meeting of the coordination committee on Tuesday decided to convert all these into "proper toilets".

While the RD ministry is running a Total Sanitation Campaign, the fresh targeting of schools and dry latrines would require an additional Rs 1,000 crore.

RD minister Jairam Ramesh said, "The ministry would divert funds from its existing schemes."

The urgency comes in the wake of social justice ministry drafting a new law against manual scavenging that plans to set a target of nine months to citizens to stop use of dry latrines. The Bill is likely to be tabled in the monsoon session of Parliament.