

Literacy for Working Children

THE government's decision to launch a Special Education Programme from January 2000 for the urban working children through the Primary and Mass Education Division could not have come a day earlier. At a time when earning wages for the family, or for themselves, has become an impelling necessity — never mind this telling upon their health — and therefore taking a precarious toll on our children, this initiative comes as a ray of hope for them. Arrangements have been made to organise a two-year "simple literacy" course under Non-formal Education Project-3. If the project works the way it has been designed to, then there is a possibility for some change in their lot who are languishing now, both in the formal and informal sectors, as child workers.

Reportedly, the timings of their schooling are to be made flexible to enable them to carry on with their jobs. Outcome of this scheme is expected to be positive. Children would get the opportunity for education, and, at the same time, it would raise the quality of labour and enable them to get higher wages, once they complete schooling.

The literacy course to our mind, would be more meaningful and pragmatic if it is enlarged to include functional literacy and vocational training. The children will then gain immensely from the engagement.