



## India

Arjun Singh  
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*Born on 5th of November, 1930 at Churhat, Madhya Pradesh, Shri Arjun Singh is presently the Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India since May, 2004. His political career spanning about 5 decades commenced when he was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Madhya Pradesh in 1954. Subsequently he was elected to the Madhya Pradesh State Legislative Assembly and Indian Parliament a number of occasions as a nominee of the Indian National Congress. He has also held a large number of important positions like Minister of Education, Leader of Opposition and Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh; Governor of Punjab; Minister for Commerce; Communications, and Minister for Human Resource Development in Government of India, Member, Consultative Committee of Ministry of Home Affairs, Chairman, and Parliamentary Standing Committee on HRD. During his illustrious socio-cultural and political career he has represented India in many International fora. He led a high level Indian delegation to China in November 1992 and also visited U.S.A., the then U.S.S.R., Israel, Pakistan, Mauritius, Saudi Arabia and U.K. He led the Indian delegation to the 26th, 33rd and 34th sessions of General Conference of UNESCO held in October 1991, October 2005 and October-November, 2007 respectively at Paris, France. He also led the Indian delegation to the 43rd Session of the International Bureau of Education, held in November 1992 at Geneva. He was the Chairperson of the 47th session of the International Conference on Education held in September, 2004 in Geneva.*

### **Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future**

I personally feel that IBE and UNESCO could not have chosen a more appropriate and timely theme than "Inclusive Education: The way of the future".

The Constitution of India ensures equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all individuals and mandates an inclusive society including persons with disabilities. India is a signatory to the Declaration on the full participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region and Biwako Millennium Framework for action towards an inclusive, barrier free and rights based society. A National Policy for Persons with Disabilities has also been framed in 2006. I am happy to share that my Ministry has worked hard for the inclusion of all weaker sections, backward classes, disadvantaged groups and minorities.

Based on a comprehensive survey of the educational and economic status of religious and linguistic minorities in India, we are taking special care to ensure that their educational attainment is at par with the general population. This includes, where required, Constitutional and other Statutory interventions to provide rights to the vulnerable sections of our society. Recently, my country has also initiated a major plan for the massive expansion of higher educational opportunities while at the same time ensuring social inclusion and academic excellence.

I am also happy to share that we have a "Comprehensive National Action Plan for Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with disabilities in 2009". Further, the Eleventh Five Year Plan of India has marked "Inclusive Growth" as its focus

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and has earmarked substantial financial provisions to make this inclusion a reality.

Education of children with disabilities is one of the major responsibilities of the Government today. Programmes suitable to the needs of the disabled children are being implemented at the national level. Sarva Shikha Abhiyan (SSA), a flagship programme of the Government of India for achieving of Universal Elementary Education (UEE), has adopted an expansive and multi-option model for educating children with special needs.

It would be important for this conference to expand the vision of inclusion beyond the traditional objective of poverty alleviation, to encompass equality of opportunity, as well as economic and social mobility for all sections of society, with affirmative action for all disadvantaged groups. I strongly feel that there must be equality of opportunity to all, with freedom and dignity, and without social or political obstacles. In particular, individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups should be provided special opportunities to develop their skills and participate in the growth process as education is the only hope to create inclusive society, which means an inclusive world.

I sincerely hope that the deliberations during the conference would go a long way towards the objective of inclusive education in all parts of the world and wish the conference all success.