

## This high-tech govt school in MP is raising the bar



NARSINGHPUR: India's government schools are usually synonymous with dilapidated classrooms, dingy buildings, disinterested teachers and truant students. However, a government school in Madhya Pradesh boasts of such advanced facilities it can give the best of private schools a run for their money.

In fact, such is the reputation of Khamariya government school in Narsinghpur district that no private school has opened or is functioning in the 15 surrounding villages.

Established in 2012, the school is equipped with closed-circuit cameras for security, and classrooms with smart class technology, LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) TVs, skill development classes and even vocational training for the students. To overcome irregular electricity supply, the school has power backup too.

The man behind the vision, headmaster Narayan Gupta, wanted to improve not only the academics but also the all-round development of students. Besides main exams, students here are offered career-oriented classes in the field of computers, health and engineering. Not only this, they also have gym classes. Currently, with a strength of 3,117 students, the school is one of the most sought after schools in the region.

Headmaster Gupta, himself a former student of the school, highlighted that the school used to be a mud-tiled hut. He said the initiative to revamp it started in 2012 when they crowdsourced more than Rs 1.5 lakh. He credited the locals for enabling the development of the school, saying they chipped in with not only money but also physical labour. Whether it's the installation of tiles or the construction of classrooms, public support has always been crucial, he stated.

He informed that in 2013, CCTV cameras were installed in the entire campus, then came the sound systems, the projectors and the LED TVs. He said that every year, they make it a mission to improve one facility in the school. He added that a National Cadet Corps unit was started in recent years and nine students have already decided to join the military forces.

Nazmi Khan, a teacher at the school, emphasised on the importance of both theory and practical classes to impart knowledge. With regards to healthcare classes, he said, the students are taught how to deal with emergencies and then we show them how the knowledge gained from books is used in hospitals so that they have a better understanding of the topic.

Vocational courses teacher Ankit Jaiswal informed that vocational training is provided to students from class nine to 12 so that students can earn a living when they grow up. Most classes have theory and practical examinations, he added.

The school lays emphasis on environmental education too. There is greenery around the school, with a special focus on cleanliness. A student of class 11, Hemlata Patel, stated they are taught everything from cleanliness and hygiene to primary medical courses and sports with the help of smart technology. She added that the computerised health centre has helped a lot of students develop skills in that area. She said it might prove to be useful later.

Hemlata's father Ramsevak Patel stated that conducting smart classes in a government school in a small village to impart training based on vocational education is unprecedented. He boasted that the students of the school are leaving the students from urban areas behind.

Even the officials with the district education department speak highly of the institute and believe that the facilities in the school are helping increase student participation. Arun Ingale, district education officer (Narsinghpur), stated that the school itself is unique because it is equipped with state-of-the-art equipment by funds collected from the residents. The district has the highest recorded number of rural schools, the biggest reason being that this school is completely digital and it has emerged as a model school in the state, he commented.