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Children-led 'university' opens in Delhi

Aiming to develop ethical values among children, a unique "university of the children and by the children" was today opened in the national capital with an emphasis on self-learning.

The 'Navjyoti Bal Gurukul', set up in Karala area of North West district by former IPS officer Kiran Bedi-led Navjyoti India Foundation, would have "department of values" instead of regular departments of a varsity and the children would be taught values of courage, honesty and service.

"It would enable thousands of children, across sections of society to learn values of ethical leadership," said Bedi, who called it a "nursery of ethical country leadership".

"In the children-led gurukool instead of regular departments, we'll have departments of courage, health, sanitation, integrity and the vice-chancellors will be a young girl or a boy," Bedi said.

The Vice Chancellor, Registrar and Department Heads for Self Governance will be selected among youngsters aged between 16-18 years.

The Gurukul would have an annual leadership programme where young boys and girls would be selected on the basis of merit and leadership qualities.

"We the elders from the foundation will only serve as mentors and volunteers and visiting faculty in honorary capacity to guide them in their endeavours in the year-long activities which will include self-teaching, prayers, value inculcation programmes," she said, adding the idea is to teach them "team-building" where "doing is learning".

It would be an after-school programme so that students who wish to utilise their time in character building and learning experience can do so, Bedi said.

She said she sees the gurukul as just a "sapling of a Banyan tree" where core values can be inculcated among the children right from inception.

"We must start early before it's too late. I see this as a nursery of ethical country leadership where values will reign supreme. The scope is endless and like IGNOU this could in future be an online university," Bedi said.

Navjyoti India Foundation, established in 1988, has been working with underserved communities. Presently, organisation works in resettlement colonies of north-west parts of Delhi namely Bawana and Jahangirpuri, and an urbanised rural area called Karala and villages in Gurgaon district, Sohna Block, Haryana.