

'CHAUDHVIN KA CHAND' OVER CITY SLUM



Waheeda Rehman and Akshara Foundation chief Rohini Nilekani spend time with slum children on Thursday — Express photo

Off to school, with Waheeda Rehman

■ **Legendary actress joins hands with Akshara Foundation to open new world for slum children**
Express News Service

Bangalore, July 31

IT was a rare day in Bangalore's largest slum. Visiting a school at the end of a narrow muddy lane was one of Bollywood's most accomplished actresses of all time — Waheeda Rehman.

The actress for whom the memorable song *Chaudhvin ka chand ho* is said to have been written, played her new role of urging children of city slums to discover schools — and a whole new life.

The Government Urdu Model

Primary and High School in Devara Jeevanahalli slum sported a festive look for the occasion, packed with eager onlookers, curious children and parents.

"I am happy seeing many of you in school, but not completely, as there just as many of you outside the school," said the actress, addressing both the children and th-

eir parents. "I hear some of the girls are not allowed to attend school. We must remember that the Koran has said both men and women should be educated," she said, to the largely Muslim gathering.

Many children of the D.J. Halli slum, as it is called, are forced to work as assistants with carpen-

ters, garage mechanics and tea shop-owners from the age of four or five. "Sometimes I know some children have no other options but to work. But a few hours of school can ensure that they know their rights and are not exploited by those they work for," Waheeda said.

Schooling, she promised,

'Wouldn't you like to become actress like me, or an actor like Aamir Khan or Fardeen Khan?'

would open new doors, possibilities and ensure children a better life. "You can choose to be anything you want to be... a doctor, an engineer or a film artist. Wouldn't you like to become a actress like me, or an actor like Aamir Khan or Fardeen Khan?" she said, to the giggling students.

Akshara Foundation has

adopted the Urdu school, where it conducts special classes for primary students. Akshara chairperson, Rohini Nilekani, urged "men to take interest in their children's future and send them to school."

Rohini and Waheeda also spent time with pre-schoolers in one of the many playhomes being run by the Foundation. The Govt Urdu Model School was adopted by the Shariff Foundation, last year, which works in tandem with the Akshara Foundation and Akshaya Patra Foundation.

Contributions of Rs 500 for a child or Rs 10,000 for a year can support Akshara Foundation's remedial education centre here. Contact Col Rajan, Akshara Foundation, Govt Kannada High School, M.M. Road, Sarvagna Nagar, Cox Town, Bangalore.