

# High on acting

A group of children in old Delhi rehearse their lines for the UN's anti-drugs campaign that kicks off tomorrow

MEHER FATMA

COME evening and Salman has to get back to selling agarbattis with his father. And night for Maria means helping her mother cook a meal for some eight people. But at high noon, evening seems a long way away.

Salman and Maria stand

from various MCD schools in old Delhi are going through the grind with Irshad Alam's Talent organisation. At present, his group is holding a two-month long workshop with some 500 students at 36 MCD schools in old Delhi. "The Road to Read, a US-based agency is financially supporting our summer camp. We try to teach the children

was pushed out of home to sell iron gates at the the Sunday Kabaadi Bazaar in old Delhi where I would lure people into buying second-hand stuff with some funny lines," says the mime artist who trained at Bal Bhawan.

But at 27, Alam has found a better platform to showcase his talent. Through his organisation he now holds theatre workshops with children and also assists theatre directors. But the most difficult bit, he agrees, is convincing parents to acknowledge their children's creative pursuits. "Hero banayega kya? is what many fathers tell me when I request them to send their children for our camps," says Alam.

At present, he is busy with various campaigns. A week ago, he organised a

## movers & shakers

performance with a group of school dropouts for the International Labour Organisation in the capital. His group is also working with Pogo's *Gali Gali Sim*.

"I plan to take two hundred children for its various episodes. At least they will get the opportunity which I missed," says Alam.

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PARTHA PAUL



with ten other youngsters repeating: 'I decide no drugs for me'. That's the opening line of their play. "The UN's Drugs and Crime branch is launching its new anti-drugs campaign on June 26 throughout the country. For its inauguration we will present our 15-minute show at Kamani," says Anil, who has scripted the story.

When most kids are glued to the TV or are kicking ball in playgrounds, these students

through songs, dance or handicrafts," says Alam.

"These children living in old Delhi are not new to this drug problem. That is why the UN chose them to present a play on this issue," says Alam, who founded Talent in 1997 and has since then been working with six to 15-year-olds living in the bastis of old Delhi.

His own childhood was not very different from that of these youngsters. "As a school boy, I