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Municipal school boards all set to lose autonomy

PUNE: Municipal school boards in the state are all set to lose their autonomy following an order from the centre to merge them with municipal corporations. The state government is likely to take a decision on the matter soon as it has been receiving complaints of irregularities in their functioning and fund usage.

Education boards in various municipal corporations enjoy autonomy and the board's chief takes all administrative and financial decisions.

Once the municipal school boards are dissolved, a new committee for municipal schools will be formed that will be under the direct control of the municipal commissioners of respective areas.

Chief minister Prithviraj Chavan, who was in the city on Friday, said the state government had received several applications to cancel the autonomy of the municipal education boards and merge them with the municipal corporations. "The issue was raised in the cabinet meeting. We will soon take a decision," Chavan said.

Merging the boards with the municipal corporation would also

improve the state's compliance with the Right to Education Act (RTE), and an order to this effect was issued by the centre to the state recently. The proposal was then placed before the cabinet meeting on Wednesday for discussion.

Mahavir Mane, director of education (primary), said, "According to RTE , the responsibility of primary education should be shouldered by the local self government. And now, all the municipal school boards will come under the purview of the municipal corporations in the respective cities."

Mane added that the proposal is likely to get a nod from the state government since the orders have come from the union government. According to the notification, once the municipal school boards come under the purview of the municipal corporations, they must be headed by educationists and experts in the field education.

Mane further said, "Despite being autonomous, there were allegations from various corners that the functioning of municipal school boards was not transparent. Even the funds granted for free uniform, stationery and books never reached the students of the municipal schools many times."

The PMC school board runs 310 schools, including 226 Marathi, 48 English, 34 Urdu and two Kannada schools imparting education to over 85,000 children.