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BMC to study impact of SRA schemes on children's education

In a bid to check the high drop out rate in civic schools, BMC is planning to study the impact of increasing slum redevelopment schemes (SRA) on children's education.

"We are planning to conduct a study to gauge the impact of slum redevelopment schemes on children's education and their progress," said Manoj Kotak, BJP corporator and education committee chairman.

"Due to SRA schemes, children who have shifted to different residential areas are unable to go to their previous school and are forced to study in schools near the transit camps," said Kotak. According to him, this crucial issue is contributing to the increasing number of school drop-outs.

Corporator from Chembur East Vitthal Kharatmol said, "Currently a large number of slum-dwellers have been shifted to other locations because of development work such as road widening, construction of flyovers and implementation of SRA schemes. When this occurs, the number of school drop-outs increase."

According to NGO Praja Foundation's white paper on the "status of municipal education in Mumbai", the drop-out rate has risen from four per cent in 2010-2011 to seven per cent in 2011-2012. The report also states that less than a decade ago, the municipal education system used to cater to over 7.5 lakh students, but now attracts less than 4.5 lakh students.

A senior education department official said, "If one looks at civic schools near the Mankhurd-Kurla belt, they are filled beyond capacity as many PAP transit camps are situated in these suburbs. There is a dire need to improve and increase school infrastructure in those areas," he said.

With civic schools reopening for the new academic year last month, the civic administration has also planned a range of other measures to ensure low drop-out rates. These include the need for semi-English schools, school buses and free bus passes for children who have to walk long distances, curtailing the misuse of schools not fully occupied and have been given to NGOs and private schools to use, monitoring activities of government aided private schools and exposure visits for public school teachers to private schools.