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GVMC enrolls destitute children into schools

VISAKHAPATNAM: The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has initiated efforts to educate children of destitute people who stay in its night shelters in the city. To begin with, six of them have already been enrolled in a municipal school at Dwarakanagar over the last two days.

The six students, including two girls, are children of destitutes that take shelter at the TSR Complex in the city. While two students each have been enrolled in class III and IV, one each have been enrolled in Class V and VI.

GVMC deputy educational officer Lakshmi Narasa claimed the initiative is a novel concept adopted by the civic body under the Right to Education Act that mandates compulsory education for children below 14 years.

"We have just started work on the concept. We will soon identify children in night shelters with the help of an NGO and try to enroll them in GVMC schools. However, GVMC can provide only education to the children and not hostel facility as it doesn't have any residential schools or hostels," Lakshmi told TOI.

At present, 143 destitute people who migrated from various parts of the state as well as neighbouring states such as Odisha

stay in the two night shelters in the city at Bheemnagar, which accommodates 65 people, and TSR Complex, which provides shelter to 78 people, said Association for Regional Tribal Development (ARTD) urban wing secretary Pragada Srinivasu.

"Many people migrated to the city because of family disputes and other reasons. ARTD, in association with GVMC, put all these wandering destitutes in the two night shelters and ensured daily wage employment. However, to prevent their children from taking up labour work or becoming beggars, we have identified six children so far and enrolled them in a GVMC school. Four other children are yet to join school," Srinivasu told TOI.

He also appealed to the GVMC to provide those taking shelter at their night shelters basic amenities such as blankets, buckets and recreation facilities according to Supreme Court guidelines. The association has also appealed to the corporation to sanction voter identity cards and ration cards to such people.

GVMC commissioner MV Satyanarayana held a meeting to review the running of the night shelters and gave an assurance that the civic body would soon set up three more night shelters in different parts of the city such as Collectorate Area, Dandubazaar and Dabagardens at a cost of Rs 80 lakh.