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Uniform for VMC students still a dream

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Opposition parties cry foul

Last year, the allocation made was dropped from RBE

This year's plan is likely to materialise in a month: Mayor

VIJAYAWADA: The general body of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) religiously makes every year a budgetary provision for supplying school uniforms to students of municipal schools. But, it is never implemented. There are “no signs” of supplying school uniforms to students this year too.

The VMC officials, according to sources, have never made any estimate for providing school uniforms to students, though the ruling Congress last year made a budgetary provision for the same. But there is no follow-up by leaders of the ruling party either. Instead, the provision was removed in the Revised Budget Estimates (RBE) presented this year as well as last year.

The issue propped up during a meeting convened to felicitate the top 20 students in the SSC examination a couple of days ago. Corporators of the ruling party and Mayor M.V. Ratna Bindu were taciturn when TDP floor leader Y. Ramana pointed out that the school uniforms were not supplied last year though budgetary provisions were made. “I could not speak at length about the issue as it was a felicitation meeting. Our party will raise the issue in the general body meeting,” Mr. Ramana says.

‘False hopes’

The VMC made an allocation of Rs. 5 lakhs for the students last year but dropped it from the RBE. The opposition parties question the

rationale behind this.

They view it as a “gimmick” of the ruling party to present a rosy and pro-poor budget.

CPI (M) floor leader Ch. Babu Rao expresses the view that the ruling party ought not to have gone back on its budgetary allocations. If the “wasteful expenditure” incurred by the corporation on several heads is taken into account, the funds to be spent on uniforms would make more sense, he feels.

CPI floor leader D. Sankar says that his party feels that the idea is confined only to papers.

The Congress has utterly failed to keep the promises it made and “raised false hopes among the poor students,” he criticises.

The Mayor is, however, confident that the Congress would keep its word. She said, when contacted, that they were planning to provide uniforms this year and it was likely to materialise in a month.

Officials sceptical

The corporation would have to spend at least Rs. 7.5 lakhs a year if the school uniforms are to be provided to 25,000 students studying in more than 100 schools run by the VMC. Roughly, Rs. 300 would be required to provide two pairs of uniform to each student.

Even if the allocation is made, it is difficult to achieve the budget targets if the funds available are taken into account, and “there are no such signs,” officials say.