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## Chennai, Madurai, Coimbatore to get special focus in SSA budget

Shastry V. Mallady

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*Total allocation for State for the current year is Rs.862 crore*

*Thorough planning initiated for Million Plus cities for 2010-11*

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MADURAI: A separate focus will be given to Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore cities in next year's budget of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

The plan will give thrust to effective implementation of SSA (Education for All) initiatives in the three 'Million Plus cities,' R. Venkatesan, State Project Director, SSA, announced here on Thursday.

“This will be our commitment from next year. There will be separate allocation in the budget and a thorough planning for the Million Plus cities for 2010-11 has been initiated,” he said. The total allocation for SSA in the State for the current year is Rs.862 crore.

Mr. Venkatesan was making a presentation at the inaugural session of third national workshop-cum-review meeting of urban planning for the Million Plus cities in the country, organised by the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, Union Ministry of Human Resource Development.

A major step taken recently by the SSA in Tamil Nadu was to set up ‘urban cells’ at State and district levels.

The State Project Director gave an overall view of the quality initiatives taken under ‘Tamil Nadu State Mission of Education for All,’ particularly in the context of school dropout rate, interventions for out-of-school children, urban deprived children, street children, migrant population, bridge courses and child-centred learning methodologies implemented in schools.

“Dropout rate at primary level is only 1.23 per cent and it was 1.9 per cent in upper primary level as per 2007-08 data. Children not attending school are being identified by the SSA staff to put them in schools. Education volunteers are posted for providing education to 314 children staying in juvenile homes in eight districts,” Mr. Venkatesan said.

According to SSA officials here, representatives from over 30 cities in the country are participating in the urban planning meet.

### **‘Million Plus’ cities**

Some of the cities are Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Pune, Bangalore, Lucknow, Jaipur, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Patna, Amritsar, Allahabad, Meerut, Kanpur, Surat, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Asansol, Surat, Coimbatore and Madurai.