

Night schools left in the dark

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Mumbai, February 14, 2008

Students of night schools are not as fortunate as their counterparts studying in regular day schools. A recent study by Pukaar, a non-government organisation (NGO) titled 'Exploring educational needs of night school children and developing methods to overcome them' has found that night school students remain deprived of even basic facilities like laboratories and mid-day meal among others.

There are 210 night schools in the state catering to the educational needs of nearly 35,000 children. Of the 126 night schools run by various trusts, 100-odd operate from BMC school premises.

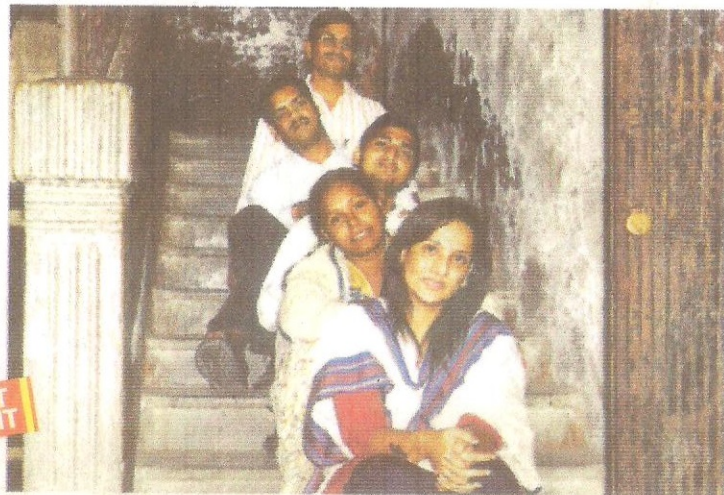
It all began when the Pukaar volunteers realised that several basic facilities were missing in night schools. That was when the idea of prodding the issue further

took shape and a core group, which called itself Masoom, was formed. Nikita Ketkar, founder-director of Masoom, said, "Since most children attending night schools come from disturbed backgrounds, it's important that proper facilities are provided to dissuade them from dropping out or taking up anti-social activities."

The study discovered that these schools make do with the same teachers who teach in day schools. "By evening, the tired teachers are in no position to impart quality education," Ketkar said.

Sitaram A Shinde, office superintendent of Shivaji Night School, Parel said, "Fresh young teachers should be posted in night schools to change the standard in these schools."

While for day students in Class eight, nine and 10, practicals are compulsory, night schools are deprived of both laboratories and



Masoom volunteers work for better night schools PIC: SWAPNIL SAKHARE

libraries. Most importantly, unlike the day schools, which are for six hours everyday, night schools are held only for three hours. The syllabus in both, however, is the same. Now that the findings are out, Masoom has shortlisted two schools — Shivaji Night school and

Maratha Night school for a pilot intervention programme, which will include providing students with sport equipment, computers, setting up a library, giving out science kits and counselling sessions among others.

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