

Teachers' group backs for basics

A like-minded group of school teachers under the name Sarkari Shala Shikshakara Geleyara Balaga engages with various stakeholders to bring about positive changes in the education system.

Sample this. The state government offers free textbooks to its students, but it's the parents who have to shell out money for notebooks. For many families, this is a strain on their pockets.

The about-10-year-old Balaga noticed the problem and planned to provide notebooks enough to last a year to every student.

The project cost was one crore and covered 36,000 children. And this began eight years ago.

At some point, after several efforts, corporates joined hands.

Requirement

Now, even geometry boxes have been sent to 56,000 students. Drinking-water units have been commissioned at 86 schools at a cost of Rs 63 lakh. These units are maintained by the Balaga members. Uniform and school bag have been supplied to over 4,000 students. Teachers have distributed Kannada Ratnakosha (dictionary) to 8,000 students.

Donations from top corporates have helped students access state-of-the-art buildings (in Kembodi village), smart classrooms and computers.

The Balaga used donations from Manipal Foundation for smart classes at high schools in Narasapura, Arabikothanur, Vemagal and Kurugal, in Kolar district.

To address the problems in the teachers' community, the Balaga roped in a retired high-court judge, Nagamohan Das, and the educationist Dr Gururaj Karajagi, and conducted workshops to hone their teachers' skills.

To encourage hard-working teachers and students, they identified and felicitated hard-working teachers and students at SSLC and pre-university levels.

The Balaga got in touch with techies for the construction and beautification of school compounds, and with the help of students, planted saplings within the four-acre school campus at Koragandahalli in Kolar district.

The Balaga now dreams to commission smart classes at 26 government high schools in Kolar district.

In the first phase, five schools have been chosen. The Balaga members say their dream is to empower every government school in the state.

"Children shouldn't discontinue education. We want to give them hope," Veeranna Gowda, secretary of the Balaga says.

"Weaker sections will be uplifted if people donate some part of their earnings for social welfare," points out Chandrappa, the treasurer.

"Teachers should pay back something to the society. They shape children's future. This spirit drives us to work harder," explains Narayanaswamy, the president.

Expansion

People, students and teachers in the neighbourhood began noticing the transformation. They approached the Balaga for similar initiatives. Free notebooks have been distributed at schools in Malur, Mulbagal, Srinivaspur, Bangarpet and KGF taluks in the last three years.

Considering requests, the Balaga members have distributed free notebooks at schools in Chikkamagaluru and Ballari as well.

PARAMESHWARAI AH SOPPIMATH
(Translated by Jagadish Angadi)



Students in Kolar district get free notebooks thanks to the efforts of a like-minded teachers' group.