

Govt plans to evaluate total no of street children: Minister



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Kolkata, Mar 20 (PTI) The West Bengal government is planning to determine the number of street children and their character, according to the state minister for Child Development Sashi Panja.

The minister said that there was a need to define whom to call street children and the government was looking for an organisation to evaluate their number.

Panja told PTI on the sidelines of a programme organised by Padmasree awardee educationist Sister Cyril and CINI, "It is a fluctuating figure as some of the children have no home and stay on road while some others have their home in slums but mostly stay outdoors."

Also there are families living on the side of railway tracks, she pointed out.

She said the government was contemplating to enroll some NGOs for the exercise.

"Our concept is work of security of girl child on streets but the move to allow vulnerable girls in local schools is welcome. Lets hope the schools will agree," Panja said.

Asked if shelterless girls and their families could be accommodated in the compounds of highrises, she said, "We have to consider certain aspects including the consent of the residents of such apartments."

Sister Cyril, an eminent educationist and consultant of Sarva Siksha Missi who had been with Loreto Day School for 32 years, said girls living in streets were always at great risk.

"We take the street girls to our school in Loreto Sealdah. While in the Loreto Day School in Sealdah 240 street children are sheltered, in all the six Loreto schools in the city the number is around 700-800," Sister Cyril said.

About the proposal to allow girls of pavement to local school buildings in city during night hours, from 7 pm to 7 am, Sister Cyril said, "I think it is an excellent idea if the local population agrees."

Chairman, Kolkata Primary School Council, Kartick Chandra Manna said, "We are in the process of vulnerability mapping in certain pockets of the metropolis where girls on footpath faced maximum danger."

He identified pockets Tiljala, Topsis and the Park Circus stretch under the bridge.

He said as a pilot scheme the Sarba Sikhsa Mission advocated the concept of starting the safe shelter project in a school with 8-9 girls and persuade schools in other parts to allow their premises. PTI SUS MD