

Kids hired to clean slums in Mumbai Mayor's seat

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THE CHANDNI Agar slums of Wadala may fall in the civic electoral constituency of Mayor Shraddha Jadhav, but that has not stopped organisations from using children for garbage collection in a scheme to clean slums as part of a system of adoption by NGOs.

The Datak Vasti Yojana, a door-to-door garbage collection programme started in 2001 and operated by NGOs with the support of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), is a novel scheme of engaging local groups to participate in sanitation and systematic garbage collection. However, an NGO in Wadala, an area dotted by slums, has engaged at least four children below the minimum age of 18 to carry out the work.

Ajay Banger, a 15-year-old



NGO has hired minors to sweep lanes, clean gutters

Class X student of a Kannada medium night school in Matunga, said he had been working in Chandni Agar for several months. "I begin early in the morning. I am assigned to sweep the lanes and at times clean gutters too. Most days I am paid Rs 90 for my work,

but sometimes the sanstha (NGO) asks me to go back without any money," he said.

Ajay's family came here from Karnataka several years ago. While his father works as a labourer, Ajay claimed he works to fend himself. "If I don't work, I will have to leave

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SHRADDHA JADHAV, Mayor

my education. Earning is a must for me," he said.

Like Ajay, others too had a similar story. Ganpat Kapote, who did not know his age but appeared to be a teenager, said he took up the work a few weeks ago. He complained that no basic safety gear was given to them. "I have entered the manhole once but no hand

gloves, boots or masks are provided to us. I don't earn enough to buy them for myself," he said.

The four boys claimed to have migrated with their families in search of work.

The Mayor, however, said she was unaware of the situation in her constituency. "It is humanly impossible to inspect your area every day? No one brought this to my notice before this. I will look into the matter and if it is true I will ask for cancellation of their (NGOs') licences," said Jadhav.

While the Child Labour Regulation and Prohibition Act, 1986, prohibits children aged below 14 from being employed in any kind of work, Sections 23 and 26 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000, adopted by the Maharashtra government covers children till the age of 18.