

## Court reserves order on Delhi's unlicensed schools

The Delhi High Court Thursday reserved its order on the fate of about 10,000 unrecognised and unlicensed schools operating from dingy lanes of the capital without even basic amenities for their 600,000 students.

After hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Social Jurist, an NGO, a division bench headed by Justice T.S. Thakur said the order was reserved and would be pronounced at a later date.

During the last hearing the court had observed that even 'dhabas were better than these schools'.

Advocate Ashok Agrawal appearing for Social Jurist said these schools were the breeding grounds of cheap labour force as they were not the proper institutions to provide education to the students.

Despite repeated court directions, the Department of Education (DoE) of the Delhi government had failed to stop the mushrooming growth of these unauthorised schools, jeopardising the lives of the children studying there.

'Safety norms must not be compromised with when it is the case of children,' the bench had earlier said.

A court-appointed committee comprising Y.V.V.J. Rajasekhar, deputy director of Delhi Development Authority (DDA), R.K. Wadhwa, assistant director, and advocate Agrawal visited 11 such schools in various localities of Delhi.

In its report, the committee stated that except for the R.J. Public School in Mahipalpur, other schools were not recognised by the civic authorities.

Pointing out various deficiencies in safety provisions in these schools, the report said while most of them did not have the fire fighting equipment, some had no electricity, and others were located in commercial areas and had no playground.

Agrawal said the schools have neither proper buildings nor basic amenities or properly qualified teachers, leave aside the provision for safety measures.

The petitioner sought the direction of the court to authorities to regulate the schools in the interest of the students.

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