

Hostel opens door to needy youth

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AGE 18 generally brings nightmares for youngsters living in children welfare institutions (CWIs). Reason: That's the time they are told to pack up.. and are left to face the world all alone.

The existing child welfare schemes, including the 'after care programmes,' look after youngsters only up to the age of 18. They are mostly not equipped to face the tough world outside and the threat of not having a place to live in hangs heavily on them.

But such underprivileged youth now seem to have some hope. A new hostel, Coomiben Bahubhai Shah Tarun Sadan, has been set up at Kopar Khairane by Vinimay Trust, an organisation of voluntary social workers.

"The hostel can house 25 destitute boys presently. Eventually, it will be expanded to house 50 of them. The size of the hostel has been kept small in order to ensure that each youth can get individual attention and groomed to become

well adjusted and independent citizens. The future of each boy will be planned individually and in consultation with him," elaborates Atul Shah, trustee of Vinimay trust.

According to him, Vinimay has been helping such boys for the past 15 years by offering various kinds of assistance and help in personal crisis. Tarun Sadan is a hostel for such homeless boys who emerge out of CWIs.

"It will provide guidance, counsel, assistance for further education, job placement, savings and financial assistance. It will look after the boys during periods of illness and unemployment," pointed out an official.

Adds Shah, "The transition hostel project will be a launching pad for the youth. Most boys will be those whom the trust knows through its child welfare activities. The average period of stay may be three years. However, in case of emergencies, they can come back to the hostel to take a fresh break into the world again. The

hostel will be their home."

The first phase of Tarun Sadan, constructed at a cost of Rs 30 lakh was inaugurated in May this year. The campus will have a built-up area of over 6,500 sq. ft. It will incorporate living rooms, kitchen, dining hall and recreation rooms.

Two CWIs in Mumbai house around 550 inmates. On an average, three to four youngsters are asked to leave such homes when they reach 18. It is for such hapless youth that the new hostel promises to lend a helping hand.