

NCPCR expresses concern over student suicides

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Chandigarh, May 6 () Taking a serious note of increasing student suicides in Kota, a hub of engineering and medical entrance exam coachings, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) today said it has come across glaring violations not just in the Rajasthan town but in Chandigarh as well where these institutes have mushroomed.

"In Kota, in the past three years 42 suicides of children have been recorded. In this year alone, there have been 4-5 cases. Commission is of the view that we cannot allow children to die like that. Steps need to be taken to check this disturbing trend," said Priyank Kanoongo, Member Education, NCPCR, while addressing a press conference here.

He said the commission had visited Kota last month and it had sought a response from district administration and the institutes about the suicides.

Kanoongo, however, said so far they have not received any satisfactory response.

On the reasons behind the students taking such extreme steps, he said the coaching institutes had a system of "batch shuffling".

"Like they have a star batch and students are under pressure to join that batch. It leads to stress among rest of the students who are unable to make it to that batch. One who has not even appeared in the (IIT and other entrance) examination, he/she is told that they cannot get selected since they fail to make it to the star batch," he said.

On the mushrooming of coaching institutes, he said, "We will give our recommendations as new educational policy is being framed."

Officials of the commission will visit other coaching hubs in India and give their recommendations to the government so that national-level guidelines are formulated.

In reply to a query about some coaching institutes in Chandigarh allegedly forcing students to wear a particular uniform and carry bags with their logos, Kanoongo said they were taking advantage of the absence of any regulatory authority.

"They go scot-free. What we are saying is somebody has to regulate them," he said.

He said through chief secretaries of concerned states, they have sought report from district magistrates of places around the country which have emerged as coaching hubs.

"We have decided to visit places where such coaching hubs exist, be these in Chandigarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, part of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra or elsewhere. We have identified various hubs, like Latur, Indore, Vijaywada, Tiruchirappalli etc," he said.

"We will prepare a detailed report...A countrywide guideline has to be framed on how coaching institutes can be regulated," he added.

He said the commission will give its observations to the government after preparing a report in 3-4 months.