The schoolbag & the burden of education

City Kids Haul An Avg 4.5kg On Their Backs

Bharat Vagnik and Raagini Bhardwaj | Times

Rehan, a class VI student in a city school, was carrying not only her regular books in her large backpack — it also contained roller skates, drama costume, a hot pack and a water bottle — all coming together to weigh over 10kg.

Right from author R.K. Narayan to scientists Prof. Yash Pal, experts have time and again insisted on the need for lighter schoolbags. With the new directive by the Centre to rationalize the burden, making it a norm to carry more than 10% of the child's body weight — the state is also looking to make yet another attempt to save the students from backbreaking loads.

Rupendrasinh Chudasama, state education minister, added the process to create a governance resolution (GR) on the basis of the directives issued by the central government has been started. "We will soon come up with the regulations which would be binding on schools in Gujarat," he said.

Is the ground reality matching the expectations? Bhavuk Patel, president of Gujarat State School Management Association, said

"The weight of the bag also matters. It should not be too broad or too low on the back.

While riding a bicycle, it should be slung so that it gets seat support.

The bag should not cause any tingling sensation or numbness in areas of limbs.

The tests conducted by Shab's team in 2010 and 2013, the results clearly showed that the bags altered neck and lower spine dimension.

The postures got changed due to altered centre of gravity. "It surely is a dire situation and we have to watch our children's backs," he added.

WHAT TOI HAD FOUND

In 2015, The Times of India had carried out a survey on 259 students — chosen at random from seven schools including W B Kapadia School, Anand Niketan School (Satellite), St Kabir School (Drive-in), J J International School, St Xavier's Loyola, Mount Carmel School and Podar International School. It was found that from class I to XI, the average weight a child used to carry was about 4.5 kg with 0.5 kg being the lowest and 5.5 kg the highest on the scale.