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FOOT NOTE

Putting a smile on children's faces at Chennai corporation schools

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The govt higher secondary school at Taramani in Chennai, which has 1,433 students, had a peculiar problem. It had just got a new building, but there was no furniture to make the classrooms comfortable for students. Walk into the school today and you'll be greeted with rows of pale blue desks and benches. "Larsen & Toubro (L&T), through the Greater Chennai Corporation, donated 75 brightly coloured desks and chairs for the children. Currently Class VII children are using them and the furniture makes the room look bright and cheerful," says principal Seenithai.

This isn't the only school to receive furniture from the infrastructure giant. "L&T provided us with 200 dual desks," says S Usharani, principal of another higher second-

ary school at Maduvinkarai. "The students feel the desks are very comfortable and they enjoy using them."

The project, part of the technology, engineering, construction and services conglomerate's school-focused work in Tamil Nadu, has donated 1,650 modular desks and benches to eight GCC schools this time around, benefiting more than 3,500 students. It is part of L&T's flagship CSR programme 'Engineering Futures,' which focuses on promoting STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education and tries to nurture scientific thinking, establish smart classrooms, manage community learning centres for underprivileged children, conduct health camps for students, renovate school infrastructure and introduce rainwater harvesting systems in govt schools.

The formal handover of modu-

lar desks and benches was done on Teachers' Day at the primary school at Maduvinkarai in the presence of health minister Ma Subramanian, mayor R Priya and senior officials from the GCC. "By investing in school infrastructure, we aim to provide students with the tools and environment they need to succeed. This partnership with the GCC is part of our continuous effort to ensure that every child has access to a better educational experience," says Anup Sahay, head - corporate strategy and special initiatives, L&T.

This is not the first time L&T is helping spruce up Tamil Nadu schools. In the past, the company has provided infrastructure for 31 govt schools across the state in 2022-23 and 18 schools in Chennai in 2023-24. "The company aims to ensure that corporation and govt schools in Kancheepuram, Coimbatore, Tiruvallur, Chengalpet and Chen-



WIN-WIN PARTNERSHIP: L&T's infra investment has benefited 3,500 students in eight Chennai corporation schools

nai are equipped with benches and desks," said an L&T spokesperson. "This will involve covering another 75 schools in a phased manner."

The company is not just focusing on classroom infrastructure. It is also offering training and skill de-

velopment in govt schools across Tamil Nadu. For instance, it runs the 'Every Child a Scientist' 15-day programme that introduces students to scientific concepts through hands-on activities, organised in association with MS Swaminathan



Research Foundation. Students from schools run by the city corporation are taken to the foundation, where they are involved in day-long activities at state-of-the-art facilities co-created by L&T. Students conduct experiments and learn

about new concepts. The programme has covered 772 students from seven GCC schools in the city till date.

That apart, L&T also conducts the engineering futures programme in association with American India Foundation, which aims to inculcate a scientific temper among children. Under this initiative, the company has implemented STEM projects that has trained more than 15,000 students from 60 govt schools till date. These projects include providing digital equipment (laptop, projectors, audio equipment) and STEM kits to the 60 schools.

But for children in schools like the one in Taramani what's most exciting are the vibrant colours of the new furniture. "The little children love the baby blue desks and chairs," says principal Seenithai. "They say it makes them happy." And that, at the end of the day, is what schools should be about.