

Special kids turn flower waste into Holi colours

Sunitha.Rao@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: A group of boys with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities have turned experts in preparing natural Holi colours from flower waste, all within a span of one-and-a-half year's training at Nimhans hospital.

FESTIVE SPIRIT

These kids from the government-run Home for Boys with Mental Retardation on Hosur Road have prepared 97kg of natural colours from flower waste, collected from temples and banquet halls, with the help of Nimhans hospital staffers and the public.

The boys, mostly abandoned by families, have learnt the art of cutting and drying flowers, crushing them with the help of machines and packing them. Nimhans pays the children



BEING SKILLED: The boys with intellectual disabilities have learnt the art of cutting, drying, crushing and packing the flowers

an honorarium of up to Rs 1,000 per month, depending on their attendance. The women and child welfare department helped the children open post office accounts and PAN cards.

With the money earned, the boys have pinned their

hopes on buying various things including headphones, cricket set, FM radio set, mobile phones and watches.

To begin with, 14 boys were sent for the training. Currently, there are nine of them, as the others were sent back to their families.

'Good at learning skills'

"When they first came here, they were hesitant and didn't even know how to hold a scissor. Now, they are different. Some of them can't speak, but they are good at learning new skills. Sometimes we have to repeat instructions, but their concentration levels surprise me," said N B Maitreyi, instructor at Nimhans who has been training them.

R Nagarathnamma, superintendent at the children's home, who took the initiative of sending the boys to Nimhans for training, emphasised the need to give them employable skills. "They are differently abled. Their sense of hygiene, communication skills and behaviour have been remarkably uplifted through interaction with the outside world," she points out.

Psychiatrists at Nimhans, who have encouraged the boys to work here, observe the changes among them. "For the first time they have come

out of the government home and have experienced how to interact. They wish the staff as they enter or leave and we see their faces lit up. It's such opportunities that make all the difference," said one of

the doctors who has been working with them.

The colour pouches, under the brand Petalists, weigh 100g each and are priced at Rs 125. They are available for sale at the OPD counter, Nimhans.

ODE TO FESTIVAL OF COLOURS

Syed Aarif



HOLI HAI! Members of Banjara (Lambani) community from Ballari celebrate Holi with a dance performance in front of Vidhana Soudha on Thursday. The Banjaras, who are known for their unique artisanship and distinctive identity, are mainly concentrated in northern parts of Karnataka