

Ek ka paachnaas for college seats

Touts make a killing behind monitoring panel's back

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Touts are auctioning seats in colleges despite the presence of the Admission Monitoring Committee in the city. Their business has peaked after the second merit list was announced.

Sources say this is when students get jittery about not getting the college of their choice and start thinking of 'other' means to get in. Students who have low marks but still want to secure seats in prestigious colleges form the target market for touts. "Students decide on their preferred college even before the results are declared. They are willing to employ any means to get into them. Students belonging to affluent families

try to make money' do what their marks can't," Manya, a tout operating in South Mumbai, said. The clientele lists for touts also include desperate parents. "It is the issue of social status that makes parents approach us," said Shyam who also operates in South Mumbai. "If children of people in their social circle are attending a college, parents want their child to be in it too. Irrespective of whether the child is fit for the college or not," he said.

Touts who spoke to *Mumbai Mirror* said that these admissions were carried out only for the management quota seats which stood at about 15 per cent of the total. Though college officials may be involved in selling these seats, typically, the touts are in touch with an 'inside con-

tact' and bypass the administrative staff. The touts set the rates for these seats according to the demand for the college. "Rates of colleges vary according to the demand, which varies every year," said Manya. While about 25 per cent of the money is kept by the tout the rest is passed on to the various links in the admission chain.

However, that a student will get a seat by following this route is not guaranteed. "Some cheats fleece students and disappear with the advance money along with the marksheets. And it is tough to make a complaint," said senate member Prashant Patil. It is also likely that a tout will ask to be paid to return marksheets if a student decides to back out, said Rahul Khedekar, vice-president, Mumbai Youth Congress.

