

The Indian Express 23.03.2013

City anchor: PMC sets a new yardstick in women empowerment

Impressed by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) model of women empowerment, the state government has urged all civic bodies to follow it.

Chief secretary Jayant Kumar Banthia recently held a meeting of administrative heads of all local civic bodies to review the work done for empowerment of women. After the presentation by each local body, the chief secretary said he was impressed by the work done by PMC and directed other civic bodies to follow it.

"The work of PMC is good and needs to be replicated in other cities. I will personally write to all civic bodies," said Banthia.

The state government started giving special attention to safety and security of women in the state after the Delhi gangrape case that had raised the issue of women empowerment across the country. Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan and cabinet

colleagues had convened a meeting of bureaucrats to work for safety and security of women.

State Home Minister R R Patil too had called a meeting of municipal commissioners, police commissioners and directed them to plan programmes that would ensure safety and security of women.

Municipal Commissioner Mahesh Pathak and Urban Community Development in-charge Hanumant Nazirkar explained the work done by PMC for women. "It was also realised that the budgetary provision made by PMC for women is more than any other civic bodies," said Nazirkar.

However, the most appreciated initiative of PMC has been the network of women self help groups (SHGs).

"There are over 70,000 women SHGs in PMC area and the civic body encourages them in various ways. The mid-day meal scheme is implemented through a women SHG, distribution of property tax bills was also planned through a SHG," said mayor Vaishali Bankar. The PMC also provides

skill-based training for women of SHGs, she said adding it has recently started imparting management skills to sell products made by SHGs.

There are various courses in tailoring and jewellery designing being conducted on behalf of the PMC. A free two-wheeler and four-wheeler driving training for women has also been started.

"The PMC has been working to empower women by making them financially independent. The civic body organises fairs for women SHGs to sell their products and soon would start a multi-purpose centre for women SHGs," said Congress leader Sunanda Gadale. She added that the PMC will soon start giving self-defence lessons to women in the city and involve women SHGs for the purpose.