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Pimpri's SSC topper Saraswati Jadhav to get Rs 1 lakh, finally

Fifteen-year-old Saraswati Shahaji Jadhav, who secured 89.45 per cent in SSC exams and missed the Rs 1 lakh prize money awarded by Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) to those who score 90 per cent or above, can now afford a big smile as the civic body has decided to give her Rs 1 lakh and not Rs 50,000, which was the laid down norm.

"It is a big moment for me and my family...I would like to thank the commissioner," said Jadhav. Newslines had taken up the issue with the Municipal Commissioner on Tuesday after PCMC administration and education officials said that she could not be awarded Rs 1 lakh as her marks were below 90 per cent.

"I discussed the issue with the education officials today. We have decided to award Rs 1 lakh prize money to Saraswati," said Municipal Commissioner Shrikar Pardeshi. He said the final announcement would be made on Thursday.

Pardeshi, however, said he was stickler for the laid down rules and generally did not believe in departing from them.

The Pardeshi administration was under pressure from parents, teachers, corporators and activists to award the prize money to

Jadhav, a student of PCMC-run Annasaheb Magar School in Pimple Saudagar.

Corporator Nana Kate said it would be a great gesture if the PCMC chief awards the prize money.

"Saraswati comes from a poor family. Besides, she is a student of civic-run school. If she is awarded the prize money, it will certainly uplift the image of the school and its students," said Kate.

Activist Sachin Godambe said, "Giving Rs 50,000 extra is not a big deal for PCMC. With voices across the country being raised to protect the dignity of women, the civic body has a great opportunity to show how it values women."

Jadhav regretted changing the right answer when she appeared for the maths paper. "I had actually written the right formula. But I changed the answer thinking it was wrong. After my exam, when I checked in the book, I realised that I made the wrong decision by changing the answer. I could have easily scored two-three marks more had I not changed the answer and would have been eligible for the prize money," she said.

The Jadhav family lives in a one-room flat in Rahatni area. "My father gets Rs 6,000 salary, of which we pay Rs 2,300 as rent. It is difficult for us to meet our daily expenses. Me and my siblings put our might into studies. My siblings have secured over 80 per cent marks in their school exams," said Jadhav.

Jadhav's mother who works as a maid said, "They should not deprive my daughter of her honour....half per cent less marks is no big deal."