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PCMC draws up Rs 10-crore masterplan for small zoo

The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) has prepared a Rs 10-crore masterplan for setting up a small zoo within the civic limits and on the premises of the Bahinabai Chaudhary zoo in Akurdi, and sent it for approval to the Central Zoo Authority of India (CZAI).

It may be noted that two years ago, the CZAI had given permission to the PCMC to redevelop the Bahinabai zoo into a small zoo on the reptile-amphibian and butterfly theme. Speaking to TOI on Thursday, Anil Khaire, director, Bahinabai Chaudhary zoo, said the CZAI had approved the small-zoo status and directed the civic body to prepare a masterplan for the same.

Khaire said, "A 12-member committee, under the chairmanship of Subhash Dumbre, additional commissioner, PCMC, was formed to prepare the masterplan. The committee consisted of executive engineer Ashok Dhage, chief garden superintendent Suresh Salunke, veterinary officer Satish Gore, retired scientist of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) M S Pradhan and others. This committee has prepared a masterplan and submitted it for approval to the CZAI."

Speaking about the plan, Khaire said, "There will be sections for pheasants, aviary of aquatic birds and reptiles. There will be an interpretation centre, veterinary centre for medical facilities for the animals. Also, information resource centre, books, CDs, journals and internet facility will be available here."

Khaire said the zoo will house mostly reptiles from the western ghats and some endangered

reptile species found across the country. "There will be 20 species of snakes, three to four species of frogs and 10 to 12 species of aquatic birds."

Explaining the reason for choosing the theme of reptile-amphibian and butterfly for the small zoo, Khaire said the resources available at the PCMC were suitable to develop a zoo only on such a theme. The zoo is part of a conservation and breeding programme on the local, national and international levels.

Explaining the significance of getting the small-zoo status for the PCMC-run zoo, Khaire said, "In September 1992, the Union government formed the CZAI. There were 500 zoos of various types in the country at that time. The CZAI reviewed conditions of these zoos, some of which were just menageries, and lacked planning, breeding facilities as well as trained staff. The Union government ordered closure of most of them after reviewing the

facilities, allowing only 169 zoos to function across the country. One of the few zoos to be recognised by the CZAI is the PCMC's Bahinabai Chaudhary zoo."

Khaire said the PCMC had agreed to make changes in the existing zoo as per the guide-lines of the CZAI, hence they received the small-zoo status. He said the masterplan is expected to be approved by the CZAI in a month and the zoo will be developed in phases after the approval.