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22 city libraries to demand civic grants

NAVI MUMBAI: Government-certified libraries in the city will soon make a formal demand to the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) to provide them with grants. These 22 libraries, registered with the charity commission, were awarded government certificates at a function conducted by the Directorate of Libraries in Nerul on March 13

The libraries feel that it is high time that the NMMC contributes towards their services of promoting reading. Comparisons are also being drawn with the financial aid extended by the Vasai-Virar Municipal Corporation. "If smaller corporations like Vasai-Virar can manage to provide an aid of Rs 1 lakh to government-certified libraries in its jurisdiction, then why can't NMMC initiate a similar action? Libraries play a prominent role in inculcating reading habits among citizens," said president of Prof Manikrao Kirtane Vachanalay Subhash Kulkarni.

The preliminary plan includes bringing city libraries under a single fold and make the NMMC aware about its responsibilities. According to librarians, the civic body's responsibility towards public welfare doesn't end with providing roads, water and electricity. Tax payers also deserve to be provided with well- equipped libraries.

Librarians recalled that around a decade ago, the civic body had shown interest in this regard by granting Rs 5,000 for a year. "The financial assistance didn't last. In fact, it was discontinued the following year," added Kulkarni. Government provides grants to libraries as per their grade, ranging from Rs 48,000 to Rs 2.8 lakh. "There is a huge expenditure incurred in running a library and adding to the challenge is the dwindling interest among the younger generation in reading. Books don't come any cheaper and increasing the library fees won't attract more memberships. So it is a difficult situation," said Vijay Kedare, secretary of Vashi-based Town Library.

When the matter was brought to notice of an official from the estate department, he said, "Such a demand needs to be presented to the commissioner and mayor and finally approved by the general body," he said.