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SMC not to levy entry fee at gardens

SURAT: The BJP-ruled Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) has rejected a proposal that advocated levying of entry fee on people visiting municipal gardens set up for public recreation in the city. It also deferred a decision on increasing the tree plantation charges collected from developers.

"The gardens are used by a number of people. Entry fee would keep people away from coming to the gardens. These gardens were built for them. How can we charge entry fee from people?" SMC standing committee chairman Nirav Shah asked while announcing the rejection of the proposal after a discussion here on Saturday.

The SMC would now try to generate extra income by creating more food courts and selling advertisement rights in the city. The proposal was moved by the administrative wing of the municipal corporation. It wanted the civic body to charge fee for entry of people to Gandhi Baug, Jyotindra Dave Udyan, Chowpathy, Floral Garden, Lakeview Garden and, Dr Shymaparasad Mukherjee Lake Garden. At least one lakh people visit these gardens every month. SMC officials argued

that levy of entry fee would help the civic body raise around Rs 90 lakh per annum from the visitors. They said the SMC already charged people for entry to Ugat Botanical Garden and Navin Florin Garden and that it should be made applicable for other gardens too.

However, the BJP corporators were against the proposal. On tree plantation charge, the standing committee postponed the decision until Diwali.