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Women self-help groups to manage half of civic-run parking lots

Improvements panel passes proposal first made in 2010

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's Improvements Committee on Thursday passed a contentious proposal to reserve the management of 50 per cent of the civic body's parking spaces in the city for women self-help groups.

According to the proposal, first put forward in 2010, another 25 per cent will be reserved for Mumbai's educated and unemployed and the remaining 25 per cent will be open to contractors from the general public.

Following a petition by former councillor Hamida Mistry and social worker Aslam Qureishi against the reservation of 25 per cent for the open category, the High Court had passed an interim order on November 15, restraining the BMC from finalizing the tender. On March 15, the High Court referred the matter to a competent authority of the BMC asking the civic

body to reconsider the reservation.

“We passed the proposal since it is a positive step towards helping women and the unemployed. The groups that get the contracts are supposed to run parking lots, and after paying the BMC, make a profit,” said Improvements Committee member and BJP corporator Dnyanmurthi Sharma. Committee member and Shiv Sena corporator Ramakant Rahate said, “The rate for pay-and-park will be decided once tendering process begins after the proposal is approved in the general body meeting. Contractors will have to make a monthly payment based on this and will have to maintain a three-month payment deposit with BMC,” he said.

To minimize traffic congestion aggravated by illegal parking in non-earmarked zones, the BMC will implement the scheme at 92 locations identified in 15 of the 24 wards. It expects to earn a revenue of Rs 11.13 crore from licence fee for 24 months. According to officials of the Development Plan Department, a total area of 11,0466 square metres has been reserved for approximately 8,400 cars, 3,954 square metre. for about 160 buses and 4,109 square metres for around 1,400 two-wheelers.

At a meeting in July, committee member and Samajwadi Party leader Raees Sheikh had raised the issue of a few contractors using women self-help groups as a front for managing more parking spaces.

“There are no checks to see these will actually be run by women self-help groups. The women may simply be used as a cover-up for the parking mafia,” he said.