

Actor depllores high auditorium rent, PCMC scraps hike as CM intervenes

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BARELY TWO hours after popular Maratha actor and theatre personality Prashant Damle lamented the "exorbitant rent" charged at auditoriums in the industrial city, the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation scrapped the hike that had come into effect from January last year.

The PCMC was forced to backtrack as Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, responding to the actor's speech, too described the hike in rent of auditoriums as "incorrect."

"PCMC runs five auditoriums at different places in the city. The administration had hiked the lease of auditoriums for dramas and plays last year. During the 100th Marathi Natya Smmelan, the CM has directed that the rent hike auditoriums should be withdrawn and it should be levied as done earlier. We are therefore withdrawing the hike," Municipal Commissioner Shekhar Singh said in a press release.

After it hiked the rents and other charges related to the audi-



Actor Prashant Damle and Bhausahab Bhoir, the chief organiser, during a procession taken out as part of 100th Marathi Natya Smmelan.*Rajesh Stephen*

torium, there were protests from artistes and their organisations. The rent was hiked from 4 to 6 fold. The other charges like electricity had also gone up.

During the inauguration of the 100th Marathi Natya Smmelan at Chinchwad, Damle pointed out how injustice had been done to the artistes and how Marathi dramas and plays had taken the hit.

Listing out grievances of the artistes, Damle said, "There is need to improve the infrastructure at

the auditoriums. Appropriate people should be appointed to maintain and run the auditoriums. Constructing auditoriums is not a difficult task but maintaining them certainly is. The rent charged at auditoriums is also an important subject. During Covid time, the then Chief Minister had reduced the fees charged for renting out auditoriums."

Damle said at the auditoriums in Pimpri-Chinchwad, even for having a meal Rs 500 rent is

charged. "Electricity is also a problem....The Government should provide help to us by creating a congenial atmosphere for the artistes. It should help reduce the rents and electricity charges," he said.

In response, the Chief Minister promised to resolve the issue. "The rent hike was incorrect. I will take up the issue with the PCMC commissioner," he said.

Two hours later, the PCMC withdrew the hike — something which it has refused to do for one year.

In his speech, Damle said politicians keep acting 365 days a year while actors perform on stage only for three hours.

"We artistes perform on stage for three actors. But those present on the dias here keep acting 365 days 24 X 7 a year. I salute their work...Since I have been given the presidentship of the sammelan suddenly, I feel like having become the chief minister..." Damle said. Among those present at the inauguration and on the dias were Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, NCP national president Sharad Pawar and Industry Minister Uday Samant.