

# Pune's green cover needs to increase four-fold, says Saraph

The Nagrik Chetna Manch (NCM) has recently been given a permanent registration by the Social Forestry Division. Anupam Saraph, who will be representing the Manch to the Tree Authority, speaks to Namrata Devikar about the current scenario of tree cover in the city.

## What is the state of tree cover in the city?

Canada has more than 8,000 trees per person. Russia has more than 4,000. The US has more than 700. Even China has more than 100. India has just 28. Pune has less than two. The Environment Protection Act, 1986, specifies that the ideal proportion of trees per person should be at least 1:4 in a city.

## What are the critical areas in the city, which need immediate attention?

It is evident that we need at least a four fold increase in tree cover. Trees are the protectors of our climate and weather patterns. The most highly valued properties across the world have the most tree cover of, old trees. Schedule I of the Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Protection and Preservation Trees Rules 2009 gives norms for number of trees to be planted along roads and

## INTERVIEW OF THE WEEK



Anupam Saraph

under various users. Planting trees at these locations is wholly the responsibility of the PMC. From Schedule I, the areas that need immediate attention both for increasing tree cover and preventing encroachments, are hill slopes, green belts, river side, banks of water bodies where the number of trees to be planted are one tree per 10 square meter. Other critical areas are

in the Development Plan (DP) and layout open spaces and playgrounds. PMC has completely neglected this aspect.

## What role will Nagrik Chetna Manch play now? How will this recognition to the Nagrik Chetna Manch empower the NGO in saving trees across the city?

The Nagrik Chetna Manch will continue to serve the preservation and protection of trees and ensure that the Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Protection & Preservation Trees Act of 1975, its Rules of 2009 and the guidelines of the Mumbai High Court and the NGT are enforced by the Tree Authority and other bodies. The Nagrik Chetna Manch now fulfils all the requirements to represent NGOs in the Tree Authority. This will enable it to insist the functioning of the

Tree Authority is in accordance with the Tree Act, the Tree Rules and various court orders. The Manch will make its presentation to the Authority and the Authority's rulings public on its website. The Manch will also prod the Tree Authority to prepare a plan to plant trees as per the legal framework.

## What is the current status of tree census? What are the new technologies required for tree census?

This is perhaps best answered by the chairman of the Tree Authority. Mobile apps that can upload photographs and locations of trees will ease the submission of trees to be counted. RFID tags embedded in trees will help verify the submissions, aide in re-count of trees during a subsequent census and protect the trees from harm. The tree census happens every 10 years.