

Not a prison anymore

FACELIFT 100-yr-old Thane mental hospital will be transformed to be a home-away-from-home

Neha Bhayana

neha.bhayana@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: An institution with expert doctors, caring nurses and state-of-the-art facilities including a gym and e-library spread across a verdant campus.

This is the state government's vision for the Regional Mental Hospital at Thane. The health department is drawing up a plan to transform the 100-year-old hospital into a treatment centre as well as 'home away from home' for people suffering from psychiatric disorders.

"A mental hospital should not be like a prison. We want to develop Thane Mental Hospital into a model institution," said health minister Suresh Shetty.

The 1,856-bedded Thane Mental Hospital (TMH) is the biggest psychiatry facility in the state — there are three other mental hospitals in the state — and currently has about 1400 in-door patients. Around 200 of them have been living at the hospital for more than 10 years and some have completed 25

PAST SHAME

September 2009: A 40-year-old patient was rushed to another hospital unconscious, with a broken nose and other facial injuries. His family had dismissed the hospital's claim that he had just fallen off his bed.

August 2009: A 59-year-old woman was found to have severe injuries. While the hospital staff claimed that she was beaten by another patient, her husband alleged that hospital staff had beaten her.



■ The 1,856-bedded Thane Mental Hospital is the biggest psychiatry facility in the state. PRAFUL GANGURDE

years. The state government is going to carry out the makeover in consultation with the Vandrevala Foundation, a charitable trust that works in the area of mental health. The Foundation has conducted a survey of the facilities and worked out primary proposal,

which was submitted to Shetty on Thursday.

As per the proposal, the revamp will be done in six phases. Each stage will include changes at a physical level such as repair of wards as well as emotional level through training and sensitisation of the staff.

TMH is housed in a Victorian building, which is in a state of disrepair.

More than 800 doctors and paramedical staff work there. Last year, two patients were allegedly beaten up by a few staffers. The government plans to rope in experts to conduct

workshops to sensitise the staff and ensure they deal with patients in a polite manner.

In the long-term, the government will also consider turning TMH into a teaching and research institute for psychiatry on the lines of the National Institute of Mental Health and

Neurosciences, Bangalore.

"We will study the proposed plan and also take into consideration to findings of the government committee that was ordered to assess mental hospitals in the state. The blueprint should be ready in the next 10-15 days," said Shetty.

PROPOSED MAKEOVER

- PHASE 1: Upgrade of Out Patient Department functioning, ward repairs, kitchen renovation, facility for occupational therapy, training for staff.
- PHASE 2: Computerisation of records, setting up dining facility in all wards, staff training
- PHASE 3: Restructuring wards, construction of new buildings, sports centre, e-library and gym
- PHASE 4: Streamlining drug delivery system, networking with different organisations
- PHASE 5: Relative live-in facility, paid services, psychiatry training for medical graduates
- PHASE 6: Specialised post graduate courses in psychiatry, mental health policy formulation