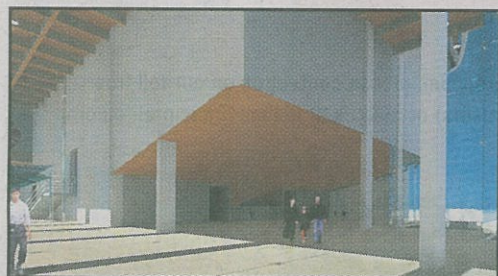


Mumbai's Tussauds at Girgaum Chowpatty

Birla Kreedha Kendra to give way to wax museum; construction expected to start in 3 months



The blueprints of the proposed museum prepared by architect Shashank Mahendale. Right: A replica of the Last Supper at a wax museum in Goa

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI

The Mumbai version of London's Madame Tussauds museum will be located at the 60-year-old Birla Kreedha Kendra, Girgaum Chowpatty. The decision was made by the BMC on Monday and the civic body will open bids and construction work should start within three months.

BMC appointed well-known city architects P K Das and Shashank Mahendale (who runs Structural Design Services) to design the museum, its auditorium, gallery and cafeteria.

Ravindra Waikar, Standing Committee chairman and Shiv Sena corporator, said the body wanted to museum to be at par with international standards. "I visited Madame Tussaud's last year and that's when it struck me that we should have a similar one in Mumbai. We will take help

from those who manage Madame Tussaud's and will make a Rs 30 crore budgetary provision for it in 2009-10. While Das will design the museum, Mahendale will take care of auditorium, cafeteria and gallery. The museum is expected to boost tourism revenue," he said.

Das said, "We are working on all aspects and will ensure that the tender will be floated soon." Mahendale added that the proposed auditorium, cafe and gallery — for which he has already prepared a few sketches — will house 400 persons at a time. "We will not demolish the entire structure of the Birla Kreedha Kendra. The original plinth will be retained. I will present the sketches to civic commissioner Jairaj Phatak in a couple of days," he said.

"It's too early to say whose statues will be installed here. But all those who have worked for the state and

made it proud, will find place. One will surely be Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and later other great personalities will follow," Waikar said.

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Wax museums can be credited to Marie Tussaud, who travelled Europe with wax sculptures in the late 1700s. Madame Tussaud's is the most famous name associated with wax museums. In 1835 she established her first permanent exhibition at London's Baker Street. There are also Madame Tussauds in Amsterdam, Berlin, Hong Kong, Shanghai; and three locations in the United States including New York City.

There are three popular wax museums in India at Goa, Ooty and Ludhiana. The Goa museum features The Last Supper (22 feet long, with 500 kg of wax) and a statue of a drug addict, preaching a "say no to drugs" message.

The Ludhiana museum was set up by businessman-turned-wax sculptor Chander Shekhar Prabhakar. He has created 40 wax statues of personalities including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and wrestler The Great Khali. The museum at Udhagamandalam (Ooty) has long been known as the poor man's Tussauds. Housed in a 130-year-old bungalow the museum displays 20 statues including those of Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose. It was initiated by Shreeji Bhaskaran, a businessman and an engineer in Information Technology.

The manager of the Ooty museum Jerald John said the cost of making a wax statue varied between Rs 3 lakh to Rs 15 lakh depending upon the complexity. About 50 kg of wax was used for a statue. The time involved in making a statue was usually between four to 16 weeks.

(WITH INPUTS FROM AGENCIES)

BMC presses Reliance to pay Rs 40 lakh octroi

It is for the two aircraft the company bought in 2007

HETAL VYAS

The BMC is doing its best to recover Rs 40 lakh, which it feels is its rightful due, from the Mukesh Ambani owned Reliance Commercial Dealers Limited (RCDL). The amount is the total octroi charge levied on two aircraft bought by RCDL in November 2007 and registered in Delhi.

In an affidavit filed in the Bombay High Court, the civic body said the aircraft may have been registered with the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), at New Delhi, but the company's registered address is in Mumbai and the aircraft fly in and out of this city.

The eight-page affidavit filed by Vasant Pandre, Dy. Assessor and collector (vigilance), BMC, on January 7 said, "The aircraft are required to be registered with the DGCA, New Delhi, as per provisions of the Aircraft Act, 1934, and Aircraft Rules 1937. Merely because they have been registered in New Delhi doesn't imply that they were imported there. Any aircraft meant for use in any region within India is required to be registered in New Delhi, since the registration authority [DGCA] is stationed there. If these aircraft are bought by the Mumbai-based importer for purpose of commerce, they are imported into the octroi limits of Greater Mumbai."

RCDL purchased a Falcon 900EX and an Airbus 319, valued at approximately Rs 400 crore. In August 2008, the BMC issued two notices to RCDL stating that they were liable to pay octroi on entry of the aircrafts within the municipal limits of Mumbai asking RCDL to furnish relevant import documents. RCDL had challenged BMC's demand and has stated, "[The levy of octroi] amounts to an unreasonable restriction on right to carry on trade and business."

Govt returns city cops' list for gallantry awards

Says there is not enough supporting evidence on the role of the 85 cops in the November 26 terror attack

ABHIJIT SATHE AND DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

The state home ministry has returned the list of 85 city policemen recommended for gallantry awards, for their role in 26/11, saying there is not enough supporting evidence, causing acute embarrassment to the Mumbai Police. The roll of honour is normally announced on Republic Day.

The list (a copy of which is with Mumbai Mirror) includes

names of three IPS officers and several sub-inspectors, inspectors and constables who were either injured, died or were in the thick of action during 26/11.

A source in the state home ministry said, "The government is not convinced with the citations attached to some recommendations."

It has thus asked for more evidence."

At the same time, there has been a lot of discomfort in the



The list was sent by Mumbai police chief Hasan Gafoor

police force about the recommendations. There are rumours of favouritism.

The police top brass will now have to provide details on what each cop did during 26/11 to deserve the award. They will also have to furnish medical reports of injuries, if any.

The list includes policemen from D B Marg police station who helped nab Ajmal Amir Qasab; ACP Isaq Bagwan and his team that pinned down terrorists in Nariman House for

about 15 hours before NSG commandos arrived; DCP Vishwas Nangre Patil Patil who was in the hotel Taj operation and Addl CP Vinay Kargaonkar who co-ordinated operations with the NSG.

Some of the cops who had seen in action during 26/11 but are missing from the list are DCP Sanjay Mohite, additional CPs Parambir Singh, Deven Bharti, K Venkatesham and Sukhwinder Singh. What has queered the pitch is DCP (spe-

cial branch) Rajvardhan, who was inside hotel Taj fighting terrorists along with DCP V N Patil, asking the government not to recommend his name for any award, as "he was only doing his duty".

Sources said norms were ignored while making the recommendations.

A senior officer said, "The list was not scrutinised by the DGP. It was directly sent to the state government. It was possibly done to save time."