

# CORPORATORS TO TAKE TIPS FROM EXHIBITION ON OPEN SPACES

Urban planner PK Das's designs to add 10 sq km to the existing 13.37 sq km of open grounds find favour with Sena; corporators to see if they can enforce ideas at ward-level

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IN a packed metropolis where breathing space is hard to come by, a city architect's plan to enhance Mumbai's open spaces by almost 10 sq km has got the attention of the Shiv Sena-ruled BMC. So much so that party executive president Uddhav Thackeray instructed his corporators to attend an exhibition by urban planner PK Das at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Fort to view his array of plans to increase the spaces without affecting any citizen.

On Tuesday, Sena's 75 newly elected corporators will go for the exhibition, with a view to incorporating the ideas at ward level.

According to Das's plans, there would be 9.85 sq km more open space in the city against the existing 13.37 sq km — or 1.1 sq m per person, the least in the country. The idea is to mark out spaces beside nallahs and rivers, and beautify them with walkways and cycling tracks; have boardwalks and prome-

nades along the coastline, major tree plantations and recreation grounds or playgrounds (RG/PG).

## Well-received

Said chairman of the BMC standing committee Rahul Shewale, "Uddhavji liked the exhibition and has asked the corporators to have a look at it. Das's planning would increase the open spaces in the city as per international standards. If we start working on the projects, they would be better than the coastal road project. I went for the exhibition and might include some of the things in the BMC's revised budget this year. We could incorporate a separate category in the budget: every year funds could be allocated under Open Spaces in Mumbai."

"We have certain beach nourishment projects going on at Mahim-Dadar-Prabhadevi



**SMART DESIGN:** BMC standing committee chairperson Rahul Shewale looks at architect PK Das's (inset) array of plans for the city at the NGMA, Fort; the architect with his plan. PIC/BIPIN KOKATE

and we could use Das's designs for other beaches and coastline," Shewale said, adding, "He has made an interesting suggestion of including the mangrove area, one of the most encroached in the city, in the development plan."

The BMC budget is set for revision in the standing committee when members can propose projects and revise provisions.

"We currently only have a head wherein Rs 492 crore has been set aside for RG/PG, while Rs 100 crore for the develop-

ment," he said.

Said Das, "Open space is shrinking in the city, reflecting the quality of life due to the exploitation of land with construction potential. I have planned a comprehensive network system of developing and maintaining open spaces, thus enhancing the social networking in the city. If corporators are showing interest in the exhibition, it can be done at ward level also."

By Das's calculations, the spaces around 16 km of beaches, 37 km of planned nallahs, four rivers 28.3 km in length, and 70.97 sq km of creeks and wetlands — a total of 155.1 sq km — can be put to advantage to create extra space.



## BAMBOO GODOWN RAZED TO THE GROUND

Officials from the Mumbai fire brigade spent almost an entire Sunday trying to douse the flames that broke out in a bamboo godown near Mulund colony. Officials confirmed that the flames broke out after bamboo poles caught fire last afternoon. One of the fire officials said, "The poles caught fire around 12 pm and spread throughout the plot by evening. As the poles were dry and piled on top of each other, the fire spread quickly. The flames continued to increase as dusk approached. We have deployed over 30 fire engines at the spot and are doing our best to control the fire." Till 8.30 pm, officials were still trying to douse the flames. Fortunately, no one was injured during the blaze and officials will ascertain the cause of the fire. TEXT/NAVEEN NAIR, PIC/DATTA KUMBHAR



## No saviour for the state



**ravikiran deshmukh**

THE Economic Survey Report tabled by the legislature recently revealed the shocking truth behind the complacent and grossly out-of-date assumptions about the state that we have been desperately holding on to. But as the state speedily plummets to new lows, the ruling Congress-NCP partnership is in shambles, with the recent last-minute desertion of the NCP for the zilla parishad presidential elections having hit the nail on the proverbial coffin.

The principal Opposition of the BJP-Shiv Sena too has selectively aligned with the NCP to capture seats of power. While the political heavyweights spend all their time playing the wily game of numbers and shifting allegiances, these other numbers tell a bleak story of neglect and negative growth in the state.

The recent exchange of barbs between the state unit chiefs of the Congress and NCP leaders have exposed the sad truth about politics today — the number game has taken precedence over any need whatsoever to honour political ideologies or doctrines. All the avowals and manifestos are sacrificed at the shaky altars of power, within weeks after elections.

While Congress leaders grumbled that the NCP had gone back on its word by aligning with BJP and Sena in a majority of districts during the elections for zilla parishad office bearers, NCP spit venom over what it perceived was the Congress Party's attempt to keep the party way from the seats of power in Pune and Kolhapur.

New political allegiances look likely to crop up soon. Different parties — national or regional — have hitherto resigned themselves to playing second fiddle to Big Brother Congress, but all that looks set to change soon. Leaders of Congress' allies have been speaking openly and boldly, in tones of defiance that would never be heard before. NCP Chief Sharad Pawar caused a furore when he said that the Congress would only have Rahul Gandhi to blame if it fared poorly in the UP Assembly elections.

Once the allies found their lost voice of protest, there was no turning back or toning it down. Soon, TMC Chief Mamata Banerjee flexed her muscles and forced the PM to sack Dinesh Trivedi. Now, Samajwadi Party chief Mulayansingh Yadav is dropping hints at early polls for the Lok Sabha.

Emboldened, Pawar soon vented spleen again, at the PM

this time, saying he was pained by Singh's remark in the Lok Sabha that coalition partners were giving him trouble. For all his political wiliness, he failed to realise that Singh's barb was aimed at the TMC chief.

With so much dissent brewing, there is a definite possibility of a third front emerging in time for the next Lok Sabha elections, with all of Congress' friends-turned-foes joining forces to keep the party at bay. Insiders have been whispering that Pawar was the guiding force behind SP's electoral victory against the Congress, BSP and BJP in Uttar Pradesh. And Pawar appears to have found an apt pupil in Akhilesh Yadav, who has reportedly been taking lessons from him in the fine art of backroom politics and political scheming, in his frequent visits to New Delhi.

There are other parties which have not minced their words about their disgruntlement with the Congress Party. Leading from the front is, of course, Mamata Banerjee, and following close on her heels is Tamilnadu CM Jayalalitha and her party AIADMK, who were lukewarm allies to begin with.

A candidate who is likely to jump off the BJP bandwagon to join this new front is Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, who was never really broken into the BJP mould, and has always struggled to accept the terms and conditions laid down by the saffron party. Recently, he almost forced BJP to support his Janata Dal candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections.

Back home, CM Prithviraj Chavan seems to be struggling to keep the party afloat, as it sinks in the thick mire of scams. With their strained relationship, the Congress and NCP look unlikely to join hands and fight the approaching elections to five municipal bodies — Bhivandi Nizampur, Malegoan, Latur, Parbhani and Chandrapur. The state chiefs of the parties have hinted as much.

According to a senior Congress minister, the NCP will lose no time to align itself with the third front and take advantage of the current political scenario, with the Congress having reached its nadir.

The BJP, in the mean time, is busy dousing the fire of internal feuds, nation-wide as well as in state units. The recent polls to civic and local bodies have clearly shown that the Sena has no ambition beyond Mumbai and Thane. So who will save Maharashtra? Amidst all this mayhem, the bleeding state has little chance of recovering its speedily declining fortunes.

— The writer is Political Editor, MID DAY