

# MUMBAI NEEDS AN OXYGEN MASK.

The city with a big heart has an ailing lung. Over time, we have suffocated it with our aspirations and whims. Quietly, it let everyone in. Typically, it harboured all our dreams. Slowly but surely, all of this has taken a toll on its health.

And this is how it stands as of today. Our city has just 1.95 sq m of open space left per capita, which is lower than even Tokyo - the world's most populated city.

While we're not looking, the lack of open spaces is choking up a throbbing, pulsating city.

Is its rapidly deteriorating health too big a price to pay for steady progress? Is there something we can do to restore Mumbai's lost glory?

The answers seem to lie with a team of expert town planners who have put together an exhibition called 'Open Mumbai'. Supported by the Times of India, the exhibition seeks to explore ways to open up a jammed and claustrophobic Mumbai.

So that we can enjoy a better quality of life and our coming generations can continue to thrive in its glory. And the city of dreams gets a fair chance to realise its own for once.

## MUMBAI FOR MIE

'Open Mumbai'  
An exhibition at NGMA from 15th March to 7th April.



# IN MUMBAI, THE GRASS IS GREENER ON NEITHER SIDE.

Boxed in the middle of a packed maze of slums, its circumference and fate sealed as it fails to find any visitors. Abandoned with heaps of waste occupying its better part, the rest frequented only by druggies and lovers. Or hanging on tenterhooks over a possible land deal, nothing more than a pale shadow of its former self.

If the current state of Mumbai's gardens is anything to go by, the coming generations have little to look forward to. With Mumbai's elite resorting to green turfs in their swanky new residential complexes, the city's land sharks have found a way to usurp open spaces by building sky-high towers in their place.

Are we leaving behind a heavy carbon footprint in the bargain? Aren't the ones who can't afford such luxuries entitled to their morning walk in the open?

The answers seem to lie with a team of expert town planners who have put together an exhibition called 'Open Mumbai'. Supported by the Times of India, the exhibition seeks to explore ways to open up a jammed and claustrophobic Mumbai.

So that the city's residents get the one thing they so desperately need but can't get: a spread of lush green to troll on.

**MUMBAI  
FOR MIE**

'Open Mumbai'

An exhibition at NGMA from 15<sup>th</sup> March to 7<sup>th</sup> April.

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

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**DRAVID'S FAB FEATS**  
Rahul Dravid announces his retirement on Friday

**164** Tests, third highest by any player

**13,288** runs, second highest by any Test batsman, at an average of 52.31. Better average overseas (53.03) than at home (51.35)

**210** catches in Tests, highest for a non-wicketkeeper  
**31,189** balls faced in Tests, more than any batsman

**36** Test hundreds, fourth highest after Tendulkar (51), Jacques Kallis (42) and Ricky Ponting (41)

**21** centuries abroad, next only to Sachin's 29  
**25** Tests as captain of India; 8 won, 6 lost and 11 drawn

## ONE INNINGS ENDS AT 39, ANOTHER SET TO BEGIN AT 38

“Finally, I would like to thank the Indian cricket fan. The game is lucky to have you and I have **been lucky to play before you**. To represent India, and you, has been a privilege and one which I have always taken seriously. My approach to cricket was simple. It was about **giving everything to the team**, playing with dignity, and upholding the spirit of the game. **I have failed at times, but I have never stopped trying**. It is why...

## Mulayam firm: Akhilesh to be CM

**Works On Azam, Shivpal To Back Son**  
Pervez Iqbal Siddiqui | TNN



SP'S NEW NETAJI? Akhilesh Yadav

**Lucknow:** A day before the Samajwadi Party parliamentary board finally decides who will be the next chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav stood firm on his decision to hand over the baton to his son, 38-year-old Akhilesh,

Mulayam is learnt to have conveyed to his brother Shivpal Yadav, and the party's Muslim face, Azam Khan, that he was all in favour of making way for Akhilesh who galvanized the party and helped it romp home with a thumping majority. The two are believed to have initially shown hesitation in accepting Akhilesh's elevation.

**Violence up, big test for new leader**  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK  
**Lucknow:** Akhilesh Yadav's leadership was put to test on Friday with more reports of lawlessness, allegedly by SP workers, pouring in. Nearly half-a-dozen incidents of violence have rocked UP within days of the party's victory. On March 6, journalists were attacked in Jhansi. On Holi day, a former BSP minister's Ambedkarnagar rice mill was torched. There were also reports of Dalit huts being burnt down at Sitapur. Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh swung into action but blamed officers loyal to Mayawati who, the latter claimed, were allowing the situation to spin out of control. **P 12**

## I leave with sadness but also with pride



TIMES NEWS NETWORK

His career stats are stunning (see Dravid's Fab Feats, above). But they don't begin to define Rahul Dravid, the gentleman who proved that nice guys can finish first. The ultimate team man, who uncomplainingly shouldered the burden of opening the batting or keeping wickets whenever called upon to do so. The braveheart who was lavish with praise and stingy with excuses. The shy thinker who grew into one of cricket's

most respected voices. The fighter whose batting went from pretty to gritty depending on the situation. Sixteen years after he debuted with a dazzling 95 at Lord's, Dravid, 39, exited first-class cricket with a press conference in his home town, Bangalore. He signed off in the manner that he had always played: with style, grace, dignity and the straightest of bats. There were no histrionics, only

a heartwarming humility. Typically of the man, he thanked many — coaches, selectors, teammates, captains, physios and family. He spoke of looking forward to buying groceries and picking up his sons from school. And refreshingly, in a country where spectators have to suffer pathetic facilities and mistreatment, he thanked the Indian cricket fan. “The game is lucky to have you and I have been lucky to play before you.” Thank you, Jammy. The pleasure was all ours.

**WELL LEFT | 27 & 28**

## Another MP IPS officer attacked

Deshdeep Saxena | TNN

**Morena/Bhopal:** A day after a young IPS officer, Narendra Kumar, was mowed down by a tractor-trolley laden with illegally-mined stones in Madhya Pradesh's Morena district, reports have surfaced about another IPS officer having been targeted in the state, this time by the liquor mafia.

**Threat to kill, P 19**

## Final report: Panel wants no I-T till ₹3L, new slabs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The parliamentary standing committee on finance on Friday suggested reworking the income tax slabs, seeking exemption for income up to Rs 3 lakh and wanting the highest tax rate of 30% to kick in at over Rs 20 lakh. To make the tax system more predictable, the panel recommended that the slabs be indexed

**New slabs not this yr, P 26**  
**Freight hike ups rates, P 25**

**DECODING DTC**

INCOME TAX SLABS	Rate
0-3*	Nil
3-10	10%
10-20	20%
Beyond	20-30%

\*Senior citizen benefits from 60 yrs instead of 65 yrs  
\*Raise tax savings schemes limit to Rs 3.2 lakh. In effect, annual income up to Rs 6.2 lakh will not be taxed

## RBI slashes CRR, frees up ₹48,000cr

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday lowered the cash reserve ratio—the portion of deposits banks must maintain with it—freeing up more than Rs 48,000 crore. Besides increasing availability of funds for loans, banks can now earn interest on money hitherto lying idle. Lenders say the cut could bring down interest rates. **P 25**

## HC stays jail for John for rash driving

Rebecca Samervel & Shibu Thomas | TNN



**Mumbai:** A sessions court on Friday upheld a lower court order holding actor John Abraham guilty of rash driving and sentencing him to 15 days in jail. The case relates to an April 2006 incident when the star rammed his bike into a cyclist on Khar-Dhanda Road, injuring two youths and himself. Soon after the court gave its order, John was taken into custody by police and put through medical tests. But his lawyers made a dash for the Bombay High Court which, just before its closure for the day, stayed the jail term and ordered the actor's release on a cash bail of Rs 20,000. **P 2**

## Aspirin could help fight 11 cancers

Malathy Iyer | TNN

**Mumbai:** An aspirin a day may not just keep heart attack away. If preliminary work of some New York-based researchers — two of them of Indian origin — is an indicator, the humble aspirin could emerge as

the best bet against 11 cancers. This designer aspirin uses two gas molecules—nitric oxide and hydrogen sulphide—to do the trick, the researchers said. They wrote in the ACS Medicinal Chemistry on Friday that their aspirin could control cancers of the colon, pan-

reas, lung, prostate, breast, and blood in mice. Their paper in Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communication said their aspirin shrank “human” colon cancer tumours by 85% in live animals.

**Can shrink tumours', P 11**

### NEWS DIGEST

#### City school bus strike called off

The indefinite school bus strike in the city has been called off. School bus owners plan to move court to push for their demands. **P 6**

#### Cabbies threaten stir next

Nearly 35,000 taxis in the city have threatened to go on a strike from March 19 demanding a fare hike. **P 5**

#### Advance rail bookings

The 120-day advance booking system for railway tickets will come into effect today.

#### Sunil Prabhu new mayor

The Shiv Sena's Sunil Prabhu has been elected as Mumbai's new mayor. **P 5**

#### Joy Mukherjee dead

Actor Joy Mukherjee, 73, of 'Shagird' and 'Love in Tokyo' fame, died in Mumbai on Friday. **P 6**

#### Duronto from city to Delhi

The Mumbai-Delhi route is set to get a Duronto train service in the next 10 days. **P 9**

#### The Crest Edition HEIR LOOMS

Once upon a time only the Congress was accused of running politics as a family business. Akhilesh Yadav and Sukhbir Badal's success shows almost every party now runs on blood lines. Will this son rise bring greater light?

#### Candid yet coy Films discuss sex and therapy, but with a twist

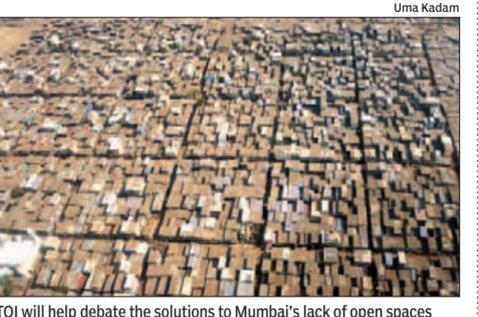
#### Great Gama A graphic novelist resurrects a wrestling legend

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Times Classifieds | P 8 & 10

## Let's give ourselves the space we deserve

If there's one aspect of city life that has upset Mumbaiers the most over the years, it is the poor availability of open spaces. There aren't enough parks to stroll in, grounds to play on, or beaches and promenades to simply unwind. Open spaces like gardens, waterfronts and green patches not only positively affect the physical well-being of citizens, they also help soothe the stresses and strains of the 24x7 life in a metro. Health experts agree that playing in the outdoors not only takes children away from their sedentary lifestyle but also teaches them how to interact with nature,



TOI will help debate the solutions to Mumbai's lack of open spaces

### MUMBAI FOR ME

► See Pages 4 & 5

#### GASPING FOR BREATH

	No.	Sq Km	%
Gardens & Parks	318	2.5	0.5
Playgrounds	631	4	0.8
Recreation grounds	603	7.2	1.6
Encroachments on above	501	5.3	1.1

erred up or encroached upon. Whatever the figure, the crime is obvious: There are several open spaces out there, but they are not being acquired as green lungs for the city. Meanwhile, many of them fall prey to illegal slums and land sharks. The Times of India seeks to open a debate on not just the complaints against such official apathy, but also on the solutions offered by citizens, professionals, social organizations and governmental agencies. In TOI's 'Mumbai For Me' campaign, we seek to bring together various sections of society to discuss how the quality of life can be improved by en-

hancing the availability and quality of open spaces. Das and his team have drawn up a plan that seeks not only to protect and develop reserved open spaces, but also develop public areas along lakes, ponds, beaches, hills, mangroves, promenades and other green zones. It seeks to create and integrate open spaces in a manner that they “intermingle with daily life”, says Das. (An exhibition of the team's solutions will run at the NGMA from March 15). There is no reason why a city with a wealth of untapped reserved areas, a national park within the municipal limits, a 34-km coastline, a profusion of beaches, lakes, and creeks, and promenades with world-class potential, has to languish in congested and concretized confines that offer just 0.03 acre of open space to every 1,000 people. That sorry figure was computed 40 years ago, when Mumbai had a population of a little under 9 million. Today's 12.4 million Mumbaiers must demand the environment and atmosphere they deserve.

## Women plan their travel better than men: Study

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Indians are infamous for being last-minute travellers. But it seems the tendency to not plan in advance and take decisions at the eleventh hour is not a cultural hang-up. It has rather to do with gender, says a study done by an online travel portal that tracked usage patterns of travel-related bookings online.

“The one very prominent trend that jumped out was that women plan their travel well in advance: 53% of bookings involving women travellers are made more than two weeks in advance,” said Noel Swain of Cleartrip, the portal that conducted the study.

The study arrived at the trends by tracking the 15 lakh-odd bookings done on the website between April 2011 and

**25% women go solo, P 11**

February 2012. Compared to the 53% advance bookings in groups containing women, only 43% men book two weeks in advance. “Twenty-one per cent of bookings containing women travellers are made less than three days in advance, as compared to 32% among men,” the study said. There are other gender-related traits. Of the 15 lakh people who made a booking (the total number of tickets booked is much larger as more than one ticket can be booked per transaction), only 19%, or 2.85 lakh, were women. They included women who booked an air ticket/hotel room for themselves, family, friends and also women travel agents who book for others.

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# TOO CLOSED FOR COMFORT

City neighbourhoods barely have open spaces for relaxation and enjoyment of the outdoors. The result has taken a toll on our quality of life

**Nauzer K Bharucha | TNN**

**D**emolish this structure and set an example for all times that 'enough is enough'. We are getting sick of this perpetual crookedness of the authorities and the supporters of these wretched officials. Confiscate their properties and build this children's park. It is absolutely sickening the way this city is being destroyed by greedy and corrupt officials."

This reader's outburst, following a TOI report on how a playground was usurped by a builder, underlines the Mumbai's anguish at the city's lack of open spaces. While Mumbai has a high wealth index, its citizenry suffers a diminishing quality of life.

Poor planning, haphazard construction and unabated encroachment of public spaces have resulted in living conditions deteriorating for the city's 12.4 million residents in terms of light, air and a healthy environment. BMC statistics show that in the island city, on an average, over 45,000 people are cramped into every sq km. Singapore (population 5 million) has a ratio of 7,300 people per sq km.

More frightful is data like: there are just seven public swimming pools to cater to Mumbai's huge population. It gets even more depressing. The widely quoted figure of 0.03 acre of open space for every 1,000 people is at least 40 years old. When it was computed, the city's population was just under nine million. Since then, even as the population has increased, large swathes of land reserved for public amenities have been either encroached on by slums or de-reserved for construction purposes. Mumbai's mangroves, playgrounds, parks, waterfronts and even protected forest lands are being steadily chewed up by slums, swanky housing societies and commercial complexes.

City-based gynaecologist Nozer Sheriar frequently advises expectant mothers to walk. "But where will they walk? On roads and broken pavements? It's ridiculous to even suggest this anymore," he said.

Reproductive health problems, especially increasing male infertility, he added, are linked to environmental pollution and the loss of green spaces. "It's anecdotal, but these factors play a part in such disorders," he said. Expressing concern that many sporting activities are possible only if one is a member of an elite club, Sheriar asked, "Which city in the world charges money to walk into a park?"

Architect Gananath Shetty had warned about Mumbai's peril four decades ago. Among the host of problems he spelled out in 1970 was the lack of chil-

dren's playing areas. "It is a universally acknowledged scientific fact that play in the early years of life is one of the most important phases of development, leading to the blossoming of a child's faculties. In spite of the better standard of living today, there is a gulf of emotional poverty, loneliness, mental illness, delinquency and drug usage amongst the younger generation," he said. The architect further added that these conditions and habits spring mainly from living in congested environments where "immense building activity is carried on without love or understanding in the most squalid of surroundings". "These denigrating conditions have destroyed the basic elements of a child's play," said Shetty.

Housing activist P K Das, who was the architect for the redevelopment of seafronts at Bandra and Juhu, said, "We consider our city to be a ground for

fought by a slew of spirited citizens' groups, activists and NGOs. In the last decade, an audacious move to exploit the 226-acre Mahalaxmi Race Course was halted after citizens approached the Bombay high court and got a stay. The plan to build a seven-star hotel, convention centre and golf course was backed by the son-in-law of a senior state politician.

Last year, the NGO Save Open Spaces stalled a builder's attempt to use a six-acre plot in Juhu for a slum redevelopment project by realigning the Irla nullah and shifting road and garden reservations. Vidya Vaidya, secretary of the General Arunkumar Vaidya Nagar Rahiwasi Sangh, which represents about 5,000 Bandra Reclamation residents, said, "We are forced to rush to the courts every time." The sangh is fighting to save an eight-acre plot, which is being eyed by a local politician.

As Mumbai struggles with

## HOW MUMBAI'S LAND IS CARVED UP

### CENTRAL GOVT LAND

	No	Sq Km	%
Rly stations & property	—	9.4	1.9
Airports, defence, ports	—	14.6	3
Major roads & h'ways	—	30	6.2
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>11.2</b>

### GREEN ZONES/OPEN SPACES

	No	Sq Km	%
Gardens & Parks	318	2.5	0.5
Playgrounds	631	4	0.8
Recreation grounds	603	7.2	1.6
Encroached open space*	501	5.3	1.1
Encroached space on NDZ**	—	4.8	1
Fish drying yards***	5	0.2	0.03
Lakes, ponds, tanks	23	7.1	1.5
Creeks, rivers, nullahs	—	13.1	2.7
Wetlands+	—	8	1.7
Mangroves	—	61.4	12.7
Beaches	10	1.4	0.3
Promenades	6	0.12	0.02
Hills, forests, nat'l park	—	53.6	11.1
NDZ++	—	39.5	8.2
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>208.2</b>	<b>43.1</b>

### LAND FOR CONSTRUCTION, ETC

	No	Sq Km	%
Hsg, ind, commercial, amenities, services	—	—	—
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>220.5</b>	<b>45.7</b>
<b>GREATER MUMBAI TOTAL</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>482.7</b>	<b>100</b>

maximizing construction potential and deriving profits. Open spaces are neglected because they do not provide a financial turnover. Not surprisingly, the quality of life has miserably deteriorated for both the rich and poor." He added that Mumbai needs a comprehensive plan for open spaces.

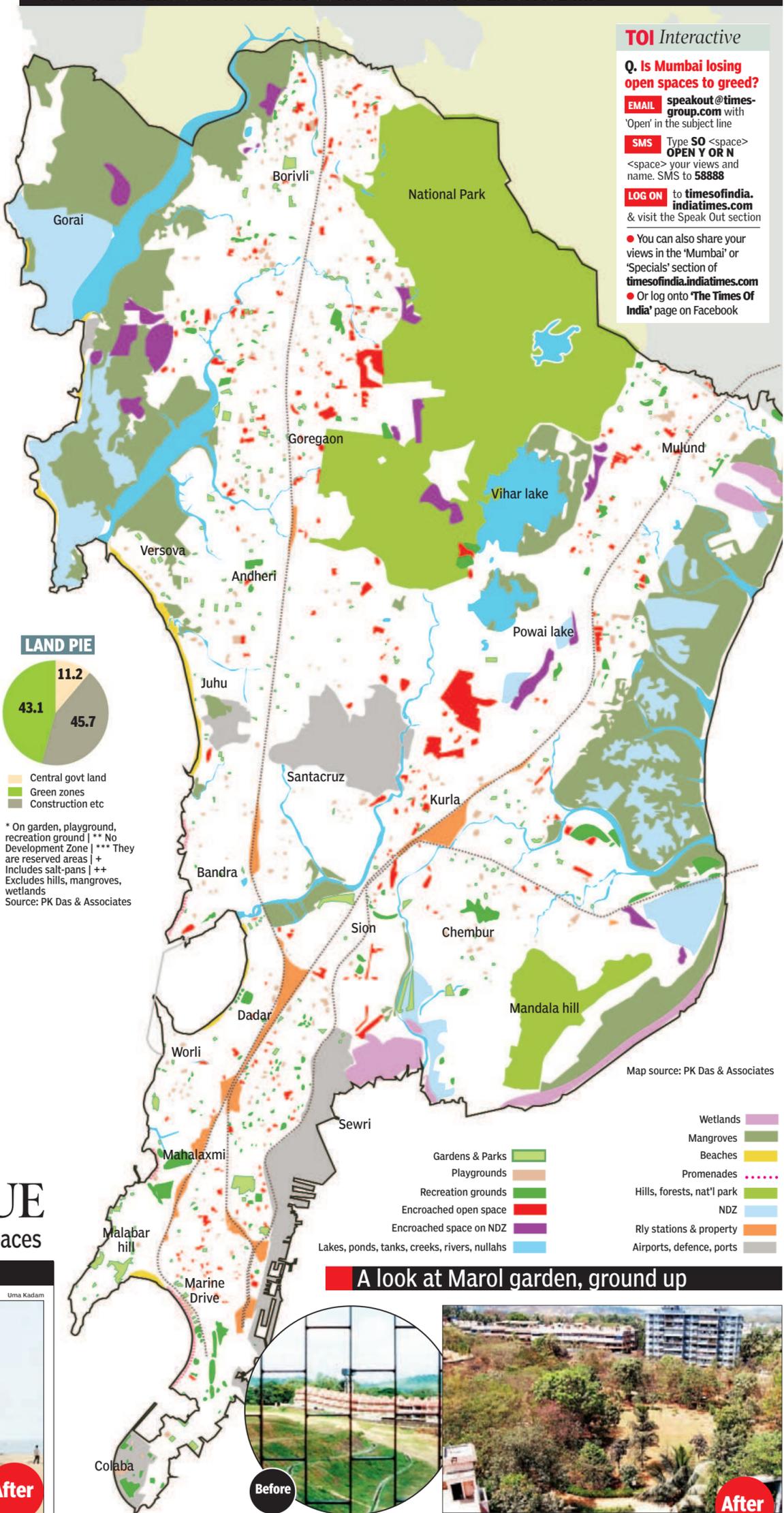
Five years ago, a survey conducted by the Urban Design Research Institute showed 45% of the city's open spaces were lost. Of the 3,103 reserved plots that were surveyed, 1,397 were completely or partially covered or encroached upon.

The fight to reclaim the city's parks and playgrounds is being

its shrinking spaces, other cities march ahead. Singapore, a little over one-and-a-half times Mumbai's size, will throw open a 250-acre botanical garden in June. New York has a great variety of open spaces, from the sprawling Central and Prospect parks, to small neighbourhood lots that are local gathering places.

Said New York-based urban critic and international lecturer Roberta Brandes Gratz, "I think these small ones are the most valuable because they really connect residents to each other.... The best-looking and most functional public spaces are the ones local people create and design themselves."

## NOT GREEN ENOUGH IN NEIGHBOURHOODS: OUR OPEN SPACE MAP



### TOI Interactive

**Q. Is Mumbai losing open spaces to greed?**

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## CITIZENS TO THE RESCUE

Here are 5 examples of people initiatives to reclaim city spaces

### Girgaum Chowpatty, bhel plaza and a sandy beach



#### Sea Change

- In 1998, bhelwallahs moved the HC against demolition of their stalls
- In March 2001, plan for a Bhel Plaza and a panel for improvement of Girgaum Chowpatty was passed
- Girgaum Chowpatty improvement plan includes the beach, parks, children's play area, a club and a restaurant, Birla Kreedra Kendra and water sports at Conti Chowpatty
- The committee continues to have a say in regulating beach activities

lawyers Rafique Dada, Navroz Seervai, Rajan Jayakar, public-spirited resident Indrani Malkani, politician Pramod Navalkar, civic official Subrat Ratho and eminent heritage architect Rahul Mehrotra. Their efforts led to a structured bhel plaza and, consequently, brought about a sea change in the experience of a day out at the beach for all Mumbaiers.

Over a decade later, the committee is still going strong. "But some issues are still pending and are in the process of being worked out," said Malkani.

A handful of us started doing up the garden. We dug pits, planted trees and watered them. Slowly, the patch started to turn a lush green

**Suresh Nair** | MAROL MILITARY ROAD RESIDENTS WELFARE ASSOCIATION

The garden has proved to be a blessing. The ladies wing that we set up has taken the initiative of educating slum children who come every evening

**Ramesh Pandit** | MEMBER, MMRWA

### A look at Marol garden, ground up



#### Greening A Quarry

- In 2000-2001, members of Marol Military Road Residents' Welfare Association adopted a quarry and endeavoured to convert it into a garden
- Soon, politicians, including state minister Suresh Shetty, late MP Sunil Dutt, Avinash Kubal of Mahim Nature Park and various corporators began to contribute to the effort
- In 2008, the 6.5-acre garden spread across five levels was thrown open to the public
- Today, the green relief attracts visitors for walks, meets and sporting activities

revive a barren plot of land during their free time, turned into a larger effort with contributions from local politicians, including state minister Suresh Shetty, late MP Sunil Dutt, Avinash Kubal of Mahim Nature Park and various corporators. So far, the residents' association has spent Rs 25 lakh on the project.

Trupti Shetty, a resident involved with the garden, said, "It is like a mini-forest. The garden is beautiful and there are many varieties of trees. There is also a small play area and children love going there. It has brought peace and freshness to our lives. We do have problems of maintenance and security but then we did convert a barren land into a green space."

► Continued on page 5

The only issue now is vagrants on the beach. There has to be constant vigil, which is not happening. There is also unauthorised occupation in the gaps between parked boats

**Rajan Jayakar** | MEMBER, HC-APPOINTED COMMITTEE FOR IMPROVEMENT OF GIRGAUM CHOWPATTY BEACH

Citizen participation is a powerful tool. The transformation of Girgaum Chowpatty is an example of how success can be achieved in partnership with the administration, thereby making the system work successfully

**Indrani Malkani** | MEMBER, HC-APPOINTED COMMITTEE

gether and decided to develop it; members of the Marol Military Road Residents' Welfare Association (MMRWA) adopted the plot in 2000-2001. What began as a humble endeavour by some to

Since 2008, the rocky terrain with about five levels has been a favourite haunt of Marol residents. The Bharatvan garden has seen a growing stream of visitors for walks, meetings, jogs and sporting activities.

The metamorphosis of the quarry has been more than an uphill task. After realizing that the quarry—an erstwhile haven of drug peddlers and squatters—was earmarked for a garden, a group of residents got to

# 'OPEN SPACES HELP SOCIAL NETWORKING'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Imagine being able to walk or cycle from Malad to Colaba or Chembur to south Mumbai along well-maintained walking-and-cycling tracks, with gardens and parks to view or rest in along the way. Maybe you could even stop by a beach. Sounds unreal, especially in a city like Mumbai, which offers an abysmal amount of open space to its 12.4 million residents.

But this is one of the longer-term goals of the Open Mumbai plan being promoted by city architect P K Das and his team, who seek to change the way Mumbai deals with open spaces. The plan may sound fanciful but a year of research, documentation, mapping and collating statistics has gone into developing a vision that seeks to place "people and community life at the centre of planning, not real estate and construction potential".

The team has mapped a variety of open spaces and other green zones across the city, in the bargain concluding that Mumbai sprawls across 482.7 square kilometres and not 437, as commonly cited. The team has concluded that an incredible 43%, or 208.2 sq km, of Mumbai includes green zones like gardens, playgrounds, encroached open spaces, no-development zones, lakes, wetlands and beaches. Much of this can be developed as public spaces or at least protected from land sharks; mangroves, for example, could have boardwalks for viewing or strolls.

The plan seeks to link neighbourhoods to parks, walking tracks, beaches and promenades. "It seeks to network open spaces in a way that enables and nurtures social networking. Disparate open spaces, disparate activity, disparate public life can be integrated into a comprehensive whole," Das says. "The quality of public spaces a city offers its residents is a reflection of the



**WHERE'S MY PLAYGROUND?** A bird's-eye view of the Andheri-Malad area shows high-rises and slums battling for space and just a small barren patch of land that could serve as a recreation area

residents' dignity and quality of life."

An example of how an area can be interlinked is in the Juhu Vision Plan, which seeks to integrate the beach with playgrounds, walking and cycling tracks. Authorities have already begun building tracks along the Irla Nullah with MPLAD funds given by Javed Akhtar.

Overall, Das's team calls for amendments and provisions to be included in the Development Plan and Development Control Regulations to facilitate a makeover in Mumbai. The plan calls for an Open Mumbai Board, made up of governmental agencies and citizens' groups, to prepare a comprehensive plan for developing open spaces, "thereby improving the quality of life and environment of the city".

## Roadblocks cleared for Juhu 'city forest'



**Get the Plot**

- In 2004, citizens started a battle to save an 18-acre Juhu plot earmarked as 'city forest'
- In Jan 2011, a delegation met civic chief Subodh Kumar
- In March 2011, Kumar approved a proposal to cancel Ronson Foundation's lease, which had been given on a caretaker basis
- In Aug 2011, BMC gave its nod to take possession of plot

After a seven-year-long battle with a private agency, members of Save Open Spaces (SOS), a Juhu citizens group, succeeded in saving a vital recreation ground plot, earmarked as a 'city forest' at JVPD scheme. It was former municipal commissioner S S Tinaikar's vision. The plot is adjacent to Vidyanidhi High School at JVPD scheme. Citizens had made a last-ditch effort to

**This is a major win for residents who were fighting a losing battle since 2004. We hope this will restore the city forest as visualized**

**Ashoke Pandit | MEMBER, SAVE OPEN SPACES IN JUHU**

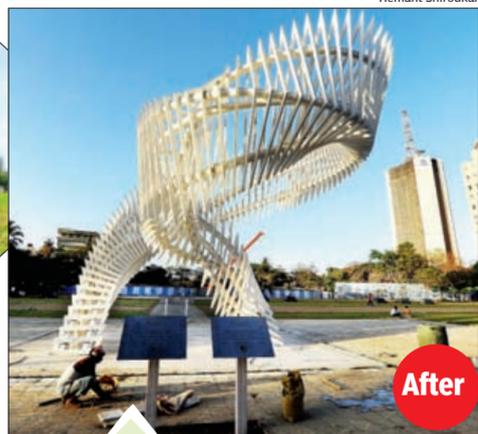
save the plot on January 18, 2011, and met municipal commissioner Subodh Kumar. Citizens submitted a design plan, which was approved by civic authorities.

The design plan includes growing a forest alongside the Irla nullah, building walking and cycling tracks, introducing cultural spaces such as a small amphitheatre, an art exhibition centre, children's play area and a garden.

## Cross Maidan gets a clean, mean look



Before



After

It was a long-drawn battle for residents of Churchgate to get the authorities to take note of four acres of Cross Maidan that had turned into a no-man's land. The space that was encroached upon and rendered absolutely unusable became a sanctuary for residents in June 2010. Nearly four acres of Cross Maidan near Churchgate at one end of Fashion Street was thrown open to public.

For years, the patch had become a cradle for hutments and fences were broken. Residents recall it as a virtual "dumping ground".

The Organisation for Verdant Ambience and Land (Oval) Trust conceptualized the project's beautification. The plot now has a large expanse of trees, lawns, walking tracks and benches for seniors. The Cross Maidan garden was handed over to the Oval Trust in 2006. At that time, it was discovered that the government resolution (GR) did not include more than an acre of the southern edge of the ground hawkers had encroached upon. "The process of getting another GR for that space took many years, and this area was handed over to the trust in October 2009. The entire procedure was lengthy but we kept going," said Nayana Kathpalia, one of the trustees of the Oval Trust.

"Even after the plot was handed over to us, the government gave it without clearing the encroachments. In fact, even now there is a commercial office functioning in the garden which needs to be cleared," Kathpalia said.

### Cross-Over To Beauty

- For years, Cross Maidan remained encroached upon, its fences were broken and it was rendered unusable
- The maidan's beautification was conceptualized by the Organisation for Verdant Ambience and Land (Oval) Trust
- In June 2010, nearly four acres of the new-improved maidan were thrown open to the public
- The plot now has a large expanse of trees, lawns, walking tracks as well as benches for senior citizens

It took us years to get the govt to pay heed to this plot. Now, Cross Maidan garden must be taken as an example of how a haven can be created with consistent efforts. The govt must ideally do its work and then seek citizens' help



**Nayana Kathpalia | TRUSTEE, OVAL TRUST**

We used the ground as one of the venues for Kala Ghoda festival. A gate must be made at the Veer Nariman Road end to attract more visitors. The encroached ground is cleared. It is an example of how a dump yard can be converted into a green haven



**Shirin Bharucha | WORKS WITH URBAN RENEWAL TRUST**



After

## First Pasta Lane walks up the garden path

The struggle was probably as long and difficult as the task to transform an encroached space into a lush garden. After a long court battle and follow-ups with the BMC and government agen-

cies, First Pasta Lane of Colaba finally got a green lung. It all began 23 years ago with a residents' movement against an eatery's kitchen, a godown and a garage that had encroached upon municipal

plots earmarked as gardens and a recreational ground. The movement lost momentum later and was revived in 2006 when the First Pasta Lane Residents' Association, through an RTI query, found out that the eatery stood on a BMC plot.

Residents followed up with the BMC for over two years and the kitchen was demolished. Preparations to create the garden started in December 2009, said Vijay Advani, joint secretary of the First Pasta Lane Residents' Association.

It has benefited the whole community. Because of the kitchen, there was a lot of pollution. But now, we have a long stretch of open space, which is unusual in Mumbai. We have greenery and a garden. Neighbouring slumdwellers also use it

**Dilip Mehrotra | A RESIDENT**

### Pasta Perfect

- 23 years ago, Colaba residents first raised their voice against an eatery's kitchen, a godown and a garage that had encroached upon municipal plots earmarked as gardens and a ground
- In 2008, BMC demolished the eatery's kitchen; preparations to create the garden started in December 2009 and it was thrown open to the public in 2010

# New mayor wants a clean, beautiful and secure city

## Independents & Allies Help Prabhu Win; MNS Absent

**Sukhada Tatke & Shawan Sen | TNN**

The Shiv Sena, along with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other alliance partners got a saimik elected as the first citizen of the country's richest municipal corporation for the fourth successive time on Friday. This came after the bonhomie between the Sena and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) in Thane extended to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), with all 28 MNS corporators remaining absent.

Senior Sena member Sunil Prabhu (42), who has held several important portfolios in the party, won with a majority of 125 votes garnered from his party, the BJP, Republican Party of India, Akhil Bharatiya Sena and Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh. All 15 independents, including rebels Vishnu Gaikwad and Vijay Tandel (both Congress) and Cyril D'Souza (Nationalist Congress Party), voted for the Sena. Sunil More, a Congress-NCP nominee and staunch Narayan Rane supporter, secured 65 votes and it appeared that the combine did not do much to garner the independents' support. Soon after his election,

Prabhu iterated his agenda to fulfill promises made in the party manifesto. "I want a clean, beautiful and a secure Mumbai. I am aware that the city has many challenges to deal with. I want to improve the healthcare sector, roads, water supply and security," said Prabhu. The deputy mayor, too, is



**FIRST CITIZEN:** Sunil Prabhu with deputy mayor Mohan Mithbaonkar

Borivli, secured 122 votes, while his rival, Harun Khan (NCP), got 65 votes.

The process went on for over six hours as each corporator voted by a show of hand and then stood up to announce the name of the candidate s/he was voting for. Cheering on from the balcony of the House were Shiv Sena CEO

Ramdas Athavle.

Thackeray later said that the Sena, BJP, RPI worked together to get the numbers. "The independents believe in our agenda. Thirteen independents had given their written support to the alliance," he said.

Nine Samajwadi Party members too abstained. The last mayoral election also saw six MNS members being absent and seven SP members abstaining.

Political observers said the MNS has always silently supported the Sena whenever needed. "This time, the MNS needs the Sena's support for the Nashik mayor's post," an observer said.

This is the first general body meeting in many years where new and young faces outnumbered the old.

Many new members were both anxious and excited. A woman was seen rehearsing her 'I vote for' speech minutes before her turn.

Another heaved a sigh of relief once she announced her vote and asked her neighbour if she sounded okay.

But the highlight was when Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray descended from the balcony to the main hall and many new corporators took out their mobile phones and ran towards him to get a photo clicked. Many of them were Congress and NCP corporators.

The five new nominated councillors are Ashwin Vyas (BJP), Avakash Jadhav, Mahiraj Shaikh (both Shiv Sena), Parul Mehta (Congress) and Girish Dhanorkar (MNS).

## Aditya's history prof nominated

St Xavier's College assistant professor Avakash Jadhav got a call four days ago from Aditya Thackeray, grandson of Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, asking for his resume. He later got a call from Sena CEO Uddhav Thackeray offering him a nominated corporator's post in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. It was a "pleasant surprise" for Jadhav, who has taught Aditya for two years. Jadhav's interaction with Aditya was not restricted to the classroom. "We had lively discussions even outside. He is a down-to-earth person with a vision," said Jadhav, who teaches history and has a keen interest in social service. From presenting research papers, Jadhav's focus in the BMC will be education. "I see this as a platform to work for the city rather than a ward," he said. Aditya said, "The idea is to bring in more vibrancy to the corporation." —Shawan Sen

from the saffron alliance. Mohan Mithbaonkar (BJP), from the party's stronghold in

Uddhav Thackeray, son Aditya Thackeray, BJP leader Vinod Tawde and RPI leader

## Now, cabbies threaten strike from March 19

**Manthan K Mehta | TNN**

Mumbai: Nearly 35,000 taxis have threatened to go on an indefinite strike from March 19 to demand an increase in fares due to revision in the prices of compressed natural gas (CNG).

AL Quadros, general secretary, Mumbai Taximen's Union (MTU), said, "The Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Transport Authority (MMRTA) cancelled two meetings with the union to discuss the fare hike. If they continue to take our demands lightly, we will have no option but to go on strike." In a proposal to MMRTA, the taximen's union has sought an increase in minimum fares from Rs 16 to Rs 20 and for every additional kilometre from Rs 10 to Rs 12. On February 17, Mahanagar Gas Ltd increased CNG prices by Rs 1.63 per kg.

Auto union leader Sharad Rao has demanded a hike from Rs 11 to Rs 16.

## 3 officials shifted

Mumbai: The state government on Friday transferred three IAS officers: J S Saharia, additional chief secretary, relief and rehabilitation, was shifted to the school education department; Vijay Suryavanshi, private secretary to cabinet minister Harshvardhan Patil, was appointed joint CEO, MIDC; and Bhandara district collector P B Kalbhor was named Gondia collector. TNN

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# WHY CAN'T PUBLIC MONEY BE USED FOR PUBLIC SPACES?

## BMC Discourages Residents Adopting Open Spaces From Using Funds Of Elected Reps

Clara Lewis | TNN

● In France, parks in various towns bear a plaque that says the safety and security of every visitor is the direct responsibility of the town's mayor.  
● Last November in the US, mayors across the country collectively petitioned President Barack Obama to use the Land and Water Conservation Fund for urban parks and open spaces. Their goal: 'everyone in America should live within a short walk of a park that is clean, safe and vibrant.'

It's a raging debate in Mumbai. Why shouldn't more public money go into protecting and developing reserved open spaces—namely parks, gardens, recreation grounds and playgrounds?

The BMC is partial to the caretaker policy, which seeks to allow private parties to maintain open spaces as long as the private group gets a portion of the space to commercially exploit. If the BMC allows a citizens' group to adopt an open space—in which no commercial exploitation occurs—then it wants to insist that no MLA or MP funds go into the venture.

However, activists question this dichotomy of not allowing public funds to be used for public spaces. After all, the Carter Road promenade was restored with help from Shabana Azmi's MPLAD funds, while the Juhu beach revamp was aided by both Azmi's and Hema Malini's MPLAD funds.

There is also a track record of citizens' groups successfully maintaining open spaces. When the state wanted to develop and maintain Cross Maidan, it turned to the Organization for Verdant Ambience and Land (Oval) Trust, which had earlier successfully restored Oval Maidan, a Grade I heritage ground. "Rope in local stakeholders and form a partnership with residents. Money must come from the civic budget," says Nayana Kathapalia, trustee, Oval Trust.

Citispac, an NGO that for two decades has been fighting to preserve open spaces, has also emphasized civic funding and people's participation. The NGO had made the first comprehensive attempt to research and locate reserved open spaces in the city and found approximately 940 acres of



**KICKING AROUND ON A DUSTY GROUND:** Children play on a poorly maintained field hemmed in by shanties and garbage in the northwestern suburbs

such spaces. At a rate of Rs 11 lakh per acre, Citispac had calculated that it would not cost the BMC more than Rs 103.4 crore to develop and maintain these spaces during the first year such a project was taken up. "The expenditure in subsequent years would reduce," said a Citispac activist.

A more detailed documentation of reserved open spaces in the city, conducted over the past year by architect P K Das's team, revealed there are 4,695 acres of reserved open spaces in the city and 1,310 of them are encroached.

The BMC takes umbrage when citizens who have adopted a garden or park approach a local elected representative for funds. "The circular which does not allow the MP or MLA fund to be used for open spaces still stands," said Subhash Karvande, deputy municipal

commissioner, in charge of gardens. The use of civic corporator funds are also discouraged.

Activists argue that if an elected representative's funds can be spent on toilets, gutters and paver

**Playgrounds must not be given to private parties, as the public will then not have access to them at all times, says environmentalist Samir Mehta**

blocks, why can't they be used for open spaces. "Not everyone can travel to Juhu beach or the Gateway everyday. Open spaces are a fundamental right and improve quality of life. Our elected representatives must be allowed to fund

these projects," said an activist from Mahakali Caves, Andheri (East). The local ALM got into trouble with the BMC for asking local MLA and minister Suresh Shetty for funds to maintain the Meenatai Thackeray garden.

Hansel D'Souza, president, Juhu Citizens' Welfare Group, said citizens struggled and fought to save the beach and six gardens. "Now we have white elephants. The maintenance of one garden costs approximately Rs 50,000 a month. How do we raise the money every time?" he asked. Citizens pay taxes to the BMC. "By not providing funds, the BMC is shirking its responsibility," he said.

Activists alleged that the BMC behaves thus to ensure that open spaces are given on a platter to private parties for exploitation.

"When the BMC acquires a re-

served open space, it gives TDR to the owner. It then declares that it can't maintain the space and so gives it to a private caretaker. The city loses in two ways—more construction and zero open space," says RTI activist Amil Galgali. "When the civic body acquires an open space it must fund its development and maintenance. Local residents and NGOs are the best security guards, so they must be made stakeholders."

Private funds can be used to maintain public spaces, as long as no exploitation results and residents are involved. For example, a company can fund maintenance while locals help with upkeep. When old areas are taken up for redevelopment, one-third can be reserved for open spaces subsidized by luxury homes and commercial complexes in the area.

## A CHILDHOOD LOST TO COUCH

A dearth of grounds has circumscribed children's play time to computer games and TV. With this, their mental space for original thinking is shrinking as well



### Cooped-Up Development

● Open spaces are vital to a child's development. They provide a child with an outlet for physical energy, thus contributing to the overall well-being  
● They expand a person's thought and actions, and thus prove to be stress-busters  
● Green spaces and water bodies have a mitigating effect on anxiety disorders, medically unexplained physical symptoms and depression

**DANGEROUS SPORT:** These kids have no option but to play on the road

Madhavi Rajadhyaksha | TNN

The changing nature of parental tussles with their school-going children in Mumbai homes is perhaps the most telling indicator of how open spaces, or rather the lack of them, have altered the quality of life for most Mumbaiers. Till a decade ago, children would fight for a few more hours of play time outdoors. Today, however, parents have to literally struggle to get their children out of the couch and into the compound.

Health experts believe the disappearing parks and playgrounds are redefining growing up for GenNext. "Children must have outdoor facilities to run about and play for their normal growth,"

**'Studies suggest that anxiety disorders, unexplained physical symptoms and depressive disorders reduce when there are open spaces'**

says Dr Y Amdekar, paediatrician and medical director of Wadia hospital. He explains that outdoor play equips children not only with physical exercise, which contributes to overall well-being, but also teaches them several behavioural aspects such as interacting with nature, developing friendships and becoming independent. "A sedentary childhood adversely affects the mental faculties of children. With video games and television, for instance, children merely use their reflexes rather than their thinking prowess," he says.

The couped-up existence affects adults as well. Lolling around in a park, jogging along the seaside or picnicking in a forest could be the most effective balm for Mumbaiers' collective angst, es-

calating stress and pent-up frustration, believe mental health experts who say open spaces are known to expand the horizon of people's thought and actions.

Shankar Das, chairperson of the Centre for Health Policy, Planning and Management at TISS, says there is an increasing body of empirical evidence in recent years that demonstrates that open space and natural environment can promote mental health and relief from stress. "Access to outdoor spaces and open air recreation offers respite from routine activities and causes the mind and body to relax. Research studies suggest that anxiety disorders, medically unexplained physical symptoms and depressive disorders reduce when there are open and green spaces near the patients' homes," he says.

Open spaces are vital to citizens' survival as the mind, body and nature are all closely interconnected. "Space is suggestive of your own area of freedom. People who stay in areas with the most open space are likely to have an open view of their life and their futures," says Shubhangi Parkar, psychiatrist at KEM Hospital. She believes Mumbaiers who are forced to live a four-walled existence are unconsciously always trying to create space for themselves. "This keeps the mind constantly agitated. Mumbaiers often avoid going into communities which limits their interactions as well," she says.

Das believes policy makers and urban planners need greater inclination and motivation to work towards creating and maintaining such spaces. "Such spaces are even more valuable in terms nurturing the mind, body and soul in a densely populated city like Mumbai."

**It's absolutely vital to have access to open spaces as it puts one in tune with nature. The vastness of nature has the capacity to put one's problems and thoughts in perspective. Open spaces thus have several benefits, starting with creating self-awareness, sensitivity to one's thoughts, awareness of others, opening up one's mind and thought, thus promoting a sense of overall well-being. It is essential for Mumbaiers to reclaim access to spaces they have or create opportunities wherever they can. Bring back picnics or encourage children to go out and play**

Shamsah Sonawalla | PSYCHIATRIST, JASLOK HOSPITAL

Outdoor or open spaces clearly have benefits for children. Apart from improving physical activity and hence fitness, they reduce the risk of obesity. Physical activity is also a good stress-buster and helps children improve their social skills and interaction abilities with peers. A healthy body always helps to have a healthy mind. Studies have shown that outdoor physical ability helps concentration and cognitive skills in children

Dr Indu Khosla | PAEDIATRICIAN

## FEELING BLUE, NOT GREEN

Madhavi Rajadhyaksha | TNN

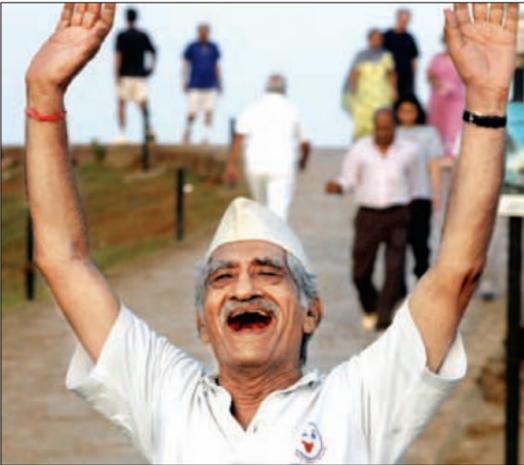
It is not for nothing that open spaces are called a city's lungs. Parks, water fronts and mangroves determine pretty much all of a city dweller's health and well-being. The quality of open spaces, after all, determines the purity of air citizens breathe, defines play activities their children indulge in, affects the incidence of infectious diseases as well sets the benchmark for citizens' physical activity.

With open spaces in Mumbai rapidly shrinking, Mumbaiers, though, experience more of the ill-effects of these spaces than gains.

Chest physician Salil Bendre of the Environmental Medical Association of India puts it simply. "An environment replete with plants and trees enables air (oxygen) flow and makes it easier for people to breathe. However, overcrowding in terms of concretization and construction of infrastructure projects in the city prevents the natural flow of air."

Not surprisingly, his clinic in Andheri, like most other neighbourhood centres, sees a steady flow of wheezing children and asthmatic Mumbaiers. Several connect the increasing incidence of respiratory problems such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) and asthmatic bronchitis to the shrinking green environs.

Doctors believe that another common complaint among Mumbaiers—that of creaky bones and



**RIGHT WAY TO HEALTH:** Laughter clubs could gain from greener precincts

### Down In The Dumps

WHO estimated environmental burden of diseases in India:

- An average Indian loses roughly 14 days of their life per year (disability-adjusted life year) due problems of water, sanitation and hygiene caused by unempt water bodies
- Diarrhoea, respiratory infections, malaria and other vector-borne diseases, road traffic injuries (due to lack of jogging and walking tracks) and neopsychiatric disorders are among the leading diseases due to environmental burden
- Nearly 86 % of annual deaths are due to diarrhoea related to the lack of water sanitation and hygiene

(Source: World Health Organization)

aching joints—would be significantly mitigated if they were to get sunlight on open grounds, dai-

ly, a seeming luxury in a city with over 20,000 persons packed into every square kilometre.

**Today we have a situation where doctors tell Mumbaiers to go out, take a walk or citizens themselves are becoming more aware about the benefits of being active, but there is no space. Green spaces are important as they boost the overall well-being of people besides absorbing vehicular pollution**

Rohini Chowdhury | INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE, KASTURBA HOSPITAL

Physician Hemant Thacker of Bhatia and Jaslok hospitals explains that open spaces covered with greenery boost the environmental health of a city, but points out that much of Mumbai's grounds and parks that haven't been utilized appropriately are reduced to dumps and garbage mounds, which adversely affects the health of citizens. "They become breeding grounds for mosquitoes, rats and termites, and contribute to the slush and muck flooding during the rain," he says. The effect was played out during the July 2005 deluge when the city was submerged in 944 mm of rain in a single day. The outbreak of infectious dis-

Today, we in Mumbai are in a sorry situation where we lack environmental common sense due to which most of our water bodies are poisoned with heavy metals. These metals are hazardous; lead for instance causes high blood pressure, heart disease, aggressiveness and intellectual backwardness. Open spaces would enable Mumbaiers to get away from their stress

Dr Altaf Patel | PHYSICIAN, JASLOK HOSPITAL

eases such as leptospirosis spread by rats and mosquito-caused dengue and malaria claimed hundreds of Mumbaiers in its wake. Open spaces then have a collateral health impact. The World Health Organization lists diarrhoea, lower respiratory infections, other intentional injuries, road traffic injuries and malaria as the top five diseases with the largest environmental contribution. Underlining the need for greening Mumbai, tree lover and gynaecologist Dr Anahita Pundole says the ability to sit and inhale in a park adds several years to one's life. "Some moments in a park are the best form of rejuvenation."

**TOI Interactive** 'WE, THE CITIZENS, SHOULD FACE THESE PROBLEMS TOGETHER & FIGHT AGAINST THE FORCES THAT THREATEN OUR OPEN SPACES'

**Q. Should citizens be allowed to use public funds for open spaces?**

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Yesterday we asked if Mumbai is losing its open spaces to greed. Here are a few of your responses:

It's a shame that Mumbai has only seven public swimming pools, which works out to one pool for more than 15 lakh people. Only the rich can enjoy the luxury of swimming in private club pools. Every municipal ward in Mumbai must have at least two small pools for the public. A water shortage cannot be cited as an excuse for not having enough swimming pools for the public. In Goa, even with an acute water shortage,

small hotels run over 100 small swimming pools, with recycled well water, along the 4km Baga-Calangute-Candolim stretch.

— Robert Castellino

It's known to every Mumbaier that open spaces are a luxury for them. They are a thing of the past. With more and more new projects coming up, one can hardly see any space left in the city. If this is not the greed of builders, then what

is? They care two hoots about the common Mumbaier, who craves for an open space in which he or she can walk or run. They also don't care about children, who don't have places to play.

— Ritwika Mutsuddi

In recent years, the BMC has become a byword for giving away space to anyone if the price is right. Even the state government machinery has encouraged people to do anything they want anywhere they want.

— Richard Dias, Chembur

Like it or not, greed is tightening its grip as encroachment takes public lands away from us, the citizens of Mumbai. Builders, vendors and slum dwellers all mercilessly engulf open spaces. The lack of efficient management by the BMC only worsens the crisis. I believe we, the citizens, should face these problems together and fight against the forces that threaten our open spaces. We should be proud of our public lands and strive to protect them for the future.

— Rushi Tawade

Is Someone Trying To Usurp Your Neighbourhood Ground? Fear Not. Arm Yourself With The Right Information To Save It

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TO RECLAIM YOUR GREEN LUNGS

Sukhada Tatke | TNN

Hemant Shirodkar

A few years ago, Powai residents noticed that a developer had constructed buildings around a reserved playground. Although the ground could still be accessed, the gate was guarded by burly security men. The sight was enough to confound the neighbouring slum-dwellers and keep them at bay. A bunch of residents felt something was amiss and approached NGO CitiSpace for help.

A look through municipal records showed up that the plot was indeed a public playground. After meetings and follow-ups with the developer, the residents managed to resolve the problem amicably. This was possible only because they were armed with knowledge.

Likewise, if there is a reserved open space languishing in your backyard or has fallen prey to misuse and you want to save it, information is key, say activists. It may be a long-drawn battle before the plot is actually used for its original purpose. But, if you're determined to save the green lung, it is not such a Herculean task.

Open space activists say that the first step towards reclaiming a space for either a playground, recreation ground, park or garden is to know its reservation status in the development plan (DP). Many a times, it ends up being a private plot and nothing much can be done about it then. However, if it is reserved under the DP for any type of open space, a battle can be fought.

The first step is at the assistant municipal commissioner's office or the local corporator. However, experts advise that before approaching either, it is worth the while to be armed with basic information about the garden. But how does one get the information?

"If people don't know how, they can approach us or the local ALM to find out the status of the garden—whether it is reserved or not. We help them look up the location on the DP and tell them about it. A local architect can also help look up the DP. If the plot is indeed reserved and is either encroached upon or used for activities other than the reservation, one can go ahead and register a complaint with the civic body," said CitiSpace co-convenor Nayana Kathpalia. "Officials are always more cautious if they know that people are aware of what is rightfully theirs. It



CHIPPING AWAY AT MOTHER NATURE: The battle to stop illegal quarrying at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park went all the way to the Bombay High Court

makes things simpler if we know the status of the open space before approaching the authorities." The NGO gets at least 50 inquiries a month on how to save an open space.

Another tool for finding out the status of an open plot in your vicinity is by using the Right to Information Act. Often, officials try and misguide the person asking her or him to give the City Survey Number of the plot, which is very difficult to find. "However, giving the exact location by describing the proximity of the plot to other landmarks is enough," said RTI and open space activist Bhaskar Prabhu.

"Under the Act itself, it is stipulated that all records need to be maintained by the government agency. In fact, officials are even expected to help the citizen file the application."

## Six things to do to save your open spaces

If you find an open space languishing or encroached upon in your backyard:

- 1) You could approach the local ALM or an NGO with your problem
- 2) Alternatively, you could go to the corporator or the ward officer. However, this would help only if you know the plot's reservation status beforehand
- 3) Once you approach the ALM or NGO, find out the reservation status of the ground from the Development Plan. You could even approach an architect

who will read the DP for you

- 4) If the plot—either a recreation ground, playground, garden or park—is reserved for an open space, you could go ahead and file a complaint
- 5) Register your complaint on the BMC helpline 1916 or by visiting the ward office's citizens facilitation centre or log the complaint on the BMC website mcgm.gov.in
- 6) Once the complaints are filed, follow up regularly with concerned officers

Problem arises if the law on open spaces is not clear; it is often misused. "Under the Development Control Rules, about 15-20% of the construction is permissible on open spaces. This is where the misuse lies. If a layman goes to com-

plain, authorities can twist the tale and tell him that construction is permissible," said former municipal commissioner D M Sukhtankar. "The complainant should not give up and probe further. If at face value, one can see

that the construction is not for ancillary reasons, the complainant should take the matter further and seek help from experts." Sometimes, the officer could tell the person that the plot belongs to another government agency. "But one should bear in mind that regardless of ownership, it is the BMC's duty to ensure it is being used for what it is reserved."

Activists warn that often one must be willing to wage a long-drawn battle. "Complaints need to be relentlessly followed, else they run a risk of going unattended into a black hole," said Praja trustee Nitai Mehta. The NGO has compiled various complaints received by the BMC. "Although there is no specific record of the number of complaints related to open spaces, there are many on encroachments."

## URBAN SPRAWL, OF A DIFFERENT KIND

Open spaces have quantifiably lifted the living standards of cities across the globe. Here are four examples to illustrate the point

### PARK

#### Flagstaff Gardens, Melbourne, Australia

Spread across 7.2 hectares (18 acres), Flagstaff gardens is the oldest park in Melbourne, established way back in 1862. A paradise for office-goers and tourists, it is acknowledged for its horticultural, archaeological, historical and social significance to Melbourne. The park, managed by the City of Melbourne, is replete with lawns that boast mature trees, and is equipped with sports facilities. Locals are allowed to rent it for barbecue. Plaques, memorials and sculptures light up the area. Melbourne has 55.4 square metres of open space per resident and an interactive open space policy.



### CREEK

#### Sherman Creek, New York, USA



The creek situated along the Harlem river in the neighbourhood of Inwood, Upper Manhattan, had fallen into neglect since the seventies. Its fate changed in 2003 when a host of residents and local bodies came together and conducted a

study on the area. Their research showed that local residents desperately wanted to reclaim and enjoy the waterfront, and that they were rooting for a pedestrian esplanade. Recommendations regarding the creation of a waterfront, walkways, parks and recreation grounds were undertaken for implementation since 2004.

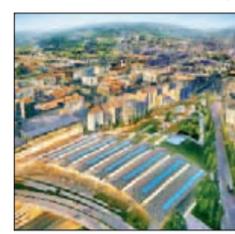
#### Egmond Beach, The Netherlands

The Netherlands has a thorough monitoring system of its coastline. More than 25% of Netherlands is below the sea level and the coast is made up of sand dunes and beaches. Authorities annually record points at every 250 metres to ensure protection. Beach nourishment using high-capacity suction dredgers is initiated wherever long-term erosion is spotted. The nourishment plan was undertaken in 1996 after about 50 metres of Egmond vanished into the sea. The local government was spiralled into action on coastal issues after a huge storm surge disaster in the fifties. The coast now boasts revetments (embankment), groynes (jetties) and beach nourishment (for conservation).



### RAILWAY STATION

#### Ourense Ave Station, Spain



A new high-speed railway station is being designed in the city of Ourense in Galicia, situated in north-western Spain. It envisages interlinking the rail infrastructure with spanning new urban parks and

pedestrian walkways. As per the design, the station is to be transparent to give passengers travelling the rail route a dekho into the mountainous landscape even as it will be topped by a series of lightweight roof canopies. The reflective ceiling will provide natural light to the platforms and the space between each canopy will be a linear opening with natural airways. Parks are to dot the station plaza and will be interspersed with water bodies to provide refreshing walkways for pedestrians.

The law does not really protect open spaces.

The provision to permit around 15-20% construction on open space should be scrapped as this is used to misguide people. An open space should be allowed to be left open to the sky with no construction whatsoever. If at all need be, it should be a temporary, ancillary structure.

D M Sukhtankar



## TOI Interactive 'BY DEFINITION, PUBLIC FUNDS MUST BE USED FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD'

Q. Do you think citizens need a better system through which complaints can be made and prompt action can be taken against parties that usurp and/or misuse open spaces?

EMAIL [speakout@timesgroup.com](mailto:speakout@timesgroup.com) with 'Rights' in the subject line

SMS Type **SO** <space> **RIGHTS Y OR N** <space> your views and name. SMS to **58888**

LOG ON to [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com) & visit the Speak Out section

You can also share your views in the 'Mumbai' section of [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com) Or log onto 'The Times Of India' page on Facebook

The BMC discourages citizens who want to adopt open spaces from using the funds of elected representatives to maintain the spaces. We asked readers on Saturday if public funds should be used for public spaces. Here are some responses:

Public funds must be allocated for public spaces. Today, it's becoming very difficult for children to play outdoor games as there are no playgrounds available for them. All these open spaces are either blocked or their condition is very poor. Proper management is required. —Aman Sharma | MUMBAI

because our democratically elected leaders have failed again and again to deliver. Let's get real. Unless there is really good leadership involving selfless social workers not affiliated to any political party, allowing public funds to be used by citizens would not be a proposition worth it. Therefore, putting the idea into practice is not as easy as it appears. —Ramesh N. Hasgekar

used for the public good. If the public good is served by encouraging more open and green spaces in our increasingly claustrophobic city, where lies the crime in letting funds be used thus? Any public servant such as an MLA, corporator or bureaucrat found guilty of impeding the process of improving our open spaces should be sentenced to 15 days solitary confinement in a small windowless cell. That will teach them. —Xerxes Aga

By definition, public funds must be

## GAVEL FOR GREEN OTHER KEY HC CASES

In the national park litigation, initiated by Debi Goenka of the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG), the HC in 2003 ordered the removal of 70,000 encroaching structures, rehabilitation of 11,000 illegal dwellers, construction of a 98km boundary wall and a ban on illegal quarrying across 200 acres. In subsequent orders, another 14,000 people had to be rehabilitated. Till now, about 50,000 structures have been removed, 9,000 people relocated to Chandivli (not all actually left the park) and only 30 km of wall have been built.

A PIL filed by BEAG to preserve mangroves, especially in Andheri, Goregaon, Malad, Malvani and Kanjurmarg, led to a landmark verdict in 2005. The HC placed a "total freeze on cutting and destruction of mangroves across the state" and sought their mapping and notification as "protected forest". The state in 2007 identified 60 sq km of mangroves, only to later whittle this down to 20 sq km as various authorities argued that "mangrove destruction is necessary for development and prevention of floods".

In 2004, an HC bench headed by Justice A P Shah stayed a proposal to commercially exploit a part of the 226-acre Mahalakshmi Race Course. The court called it a "matter of grave concern and against public interest". The Royal Western India Turf Club had entered into an agreement with a private developer, Pegasus Infrastructure, to set up a hotel, convention centre, service apartments and golf course. The club was to get Rs 135 crore and other royalties.

Last but not least, the high court halted the sale of five NTC mill lands in the heart of the city in 2005. The scheme was for 600 acres of land. The modification in 2001 of the crucial Development Control Regulation 58 significantly reduced open spaces the city was to get, said Goenka. The matter went to the SC, which set aside the HC verdict and allowed a three-way split of open lands (non-built-up lands) between the developer, Mhada (for public housing) and BMC (for open spaces).

# In 10 yrs, HC battled for 33,000 green acres

## Judiciary Has Often Stepped In To Stop The Plunder Of Open Spaces In The Mumbai Region

Swati Deshpande | TNN

A decade ago, a tiny two-paragraph court order packed one of the mightiest punches for a city starved of open spaces. An interim command, it halted the Slum Rehabilitation Authority's plan to let developers dig into plots reserved for gardens, parks and playgrounds.

A vigilant NGO, CitiSpace, challenged as "flawed and illegal" the new state policy to allow slum rehabilitation on reserved open spaces and the Bombay High Court responded with matching urgency. In July 2002, the court said, "Until further orders, no new rehabilitation scheme (is) to be sanctioned without permission of this court, on open spaces reserved for gardens, parks, playgrounds, recreational spaces, maidans, pavements, roads and carriageways." The order, faded from public memory, remains interim, but still stands as a protective shield against the plunder of precious public playgrounds and parks already encroached upon.

The next victory came a year later, when the HC rejected the state's ambitious plan to rehabilitate nearly 7,000 slum-dwellers who were spread across 46 pockets and 180 acres of the vast Aarey Milk Colony, Goregaon. The plan was to house them on 50 acres of the colony's No Development Zone (NDZ).

The high court has been saving the Mumbai region's greenery one Public Interest Litigation (PIL) at a time. In the last decade alone it has single handedly protected, prevented construction on or removed encroachments from over 33,000 acres — an area that would cover 1,500 Oval Maidans. The land includes 15,000

Without the HC orders, the national park would have been overrun by encroachers and the mangroves wiped out by builders. But the authorities have been lax in implementing the orders

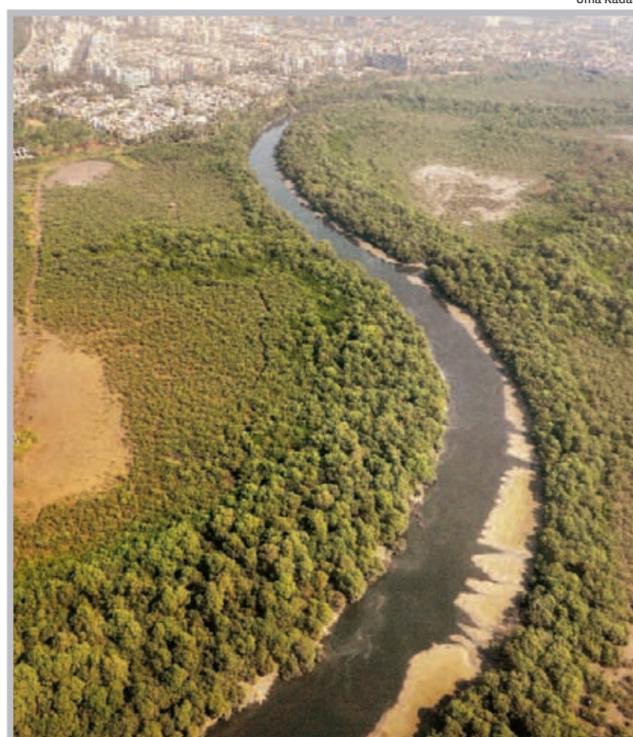
—Debi Goenka | ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST WHO HAS FILED PILS

Politicians have played a major role in ensuring that the city is starved of open spaces. Would Juhu beach have ever been cleaned and beautified if the HC passed no orders? The citizens' only hope is the judiciary

—Gautam Patel | COUNSEL WHO HAS ARGUED FOR PILS

acres of mangroves in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane, 50 acres of Aarey NDZ, parts of the 226-acre Mahalakshmi Race Course and 17,500 acres of the national park in Mumbai and Thane.

The major battles include the one that started in 1995 to rid the Sanjay Gandhi National Park—35 times the size of New York's Central Park—of massive encroachment and illegal quarrying, and the very recent scathing indictment of former chief minister Vilasrao Desh-



LONG, WINDING STRUGGLE: Citizens have had to fight in court to save mangroves

mukh for the allotment of 20 acres of NDZ in Aarey Milk Colony to filmmaker Subhash Ghai's film school Whistling Woods International. In between, the judiciary played a key role in monitoring man-

groves, changes to Development Control Rules, changes in land reservation and sales of mill lands. It also beautified beaches and protected the race course from being home to cranes instead of horses.

The Supreme Court has overturned a few of the verdicts passed by the high court, but also upheld various others. Juhu and Girgaum beaches, both "important public spaces", as the high court termed them, would still have been dens of crime and grime had the court not stepped in. HC judges visited both beaches to take stock of problems. In 2001, high court judges A P Shah and S J Vazifdar appointed a committee to beautify and monitor Girgaum Chowpatty. Nearly 50 food stalls that littered the beach were organized into a bhel plaza. The court passed final orders in 2005, accepting guidelines to halt further encroachments and prevent political rallies and giving a thumbs-down to the state's plea to permit "social" functions on the beach 60 days a year. Justice Shah had observed, "Chowpatty is one of the few scenic spots in the city which can be enjoyed by the citizens of this overcrowded city."

Juhu beach got a makeover after the HC ordered the demolition of walls erected by beachside bungalows, housing societies and hotels and the removal of encroachments in 2005. The following year it gave its approval to a Rs 2-crore beautification scheme chalked out by architect P K Das for the 4km sandy sea-face. It was a three-year battle waged by the Save Juhu Beach committee and others.

More than anything else, it was the battle to get open spaces for Mumbai from the sale of mill lands that pitted builders against citizens, activists and environmentalists. While the Supreme Court set aside the HC verdict in the case, the words of HC Justice S Radhakrishna, who quoted writer Aldous Huxley, still ring in the ears. Radhakrishna said if Mumbai is deprived of lung space, the city may get a "next generation full of idiots and morons". "We should not forget the duty of the present generation to posterity for playgrounds and housing," he said.

If All Goes As Planned, Bandra's Coastline Will Soon Get Its Fourth Promenade After Bandstand, Carter Rd & Land's End

# Evening walk along Chimbai beach, anyone?

Linah Baliga | TNN

It used to be an idyllic strip of coast from St Andrew's Church right up to Jogger's Park in Bandra (West). Now it languishes in a decrepit state, strewn with rubble and overrun by encroachers. This is Chimbai beach, which outlines the eponymous fishing village.

In 2008, local fishermen, along with Bandra residents, decided that enough was enough and that the beach must be restored to its former glory. A plan to turn this wish into a reality was conceived by architect P K Das — and nine months ago, it got the BMC's approval.

The beautification plan goes beyond reclaiming the stretch. The entire length would be lined with walkways and a promenade, to be shaded by coconut groves and other plantations. "Chimbai is a part of our masterplan for waterfront development and follows our earlier projects at Carter Road, Bandra Bandstand and Juhu beach," said Das. "The endeavour is to integrate the beach plan and put it into the network of public spaces in Mumbai to safeguard it, as it's now open to encroachments. There will be spaces (a jetty and

ramps) for fishermen to dock and repair their boats. There will be other spaces to carry out their cultural and community activities," said Das. It would be integrated with Bandstand and Carter Road.

The plan also features open spaces and an amphitheatre for cultural and social programmes like at Carter Road and Bandstand. Extra toppings include a children's park, a playground and a few gardens as well. An edge wall has been envisioned to prevent its defacement and keep it off-limits from encroachers.

"We have also planned for weekend bazaars where the local fishing community could serve the visitors fish cooked in their traditional style. So, on weekends one could walk in and buy fried fish, fish curry or fish tandoor and enjoy a typical traditional fish meal," said Das.

But the reality is different today. The builder lobby has not spared these sandy shores and 15 buildings have come up on it. For the last seven years, the developers have been eyeing Chimbai, and constructing one-storey bungalows right on the beach.

"They violate the CRZ norms. We



CHANGING SHORELINE: A view from a fish-drying yard of the seashore that will be revamped and beautified

have been fighting against rampant illegal construction for three years. The BMC and the collector just pass the buck," said Arden Uttankar, a local Chimbaikar. The idea of restoring the beach will begin to take shape only if the rubble-clearing process succeeds.

"The schedule of the tide is hampering the cleanliness drive. The BMC contractors piled up garbage on one end of the beach; it was a failure. We also

learnt that the BMC didn't have enough garbage trucks. It's even worse now. The harbour division was supposed to construct a tsunami wall, to set up a certain boundary to break the force of the tide. Nothing came of that plan. Encroachment has increased and they first have to do a survey on the number of structures that have come up in the CRZ area," said Warren Falcon, whose father was a fisherman.

Falcon remembers the time when the beach was never short of fresh fish and crabs.

"There was ankle-deep sand on the beach for kids. Elderly people would sit there and play cards." Today, the rocks that they walked on during their childhood are covered with construction debris. "It was a beautiful sandy beach, and my son would go fishing on Sundays. We want the beach to come back to Bandra."

So much garbage is thrown into the sea that there is no solution to it. The BMC garbage van comes at 11 am and the local residents throw their garbage into the sea after 8 pm. There should be bins near the shore. Until the garbage is removed, beautification of the beach will remain a distant reality

Arden Uttankar | CHIMBAI RESIDENT

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Warren Falcon | CHIMBAI RESIDENT

## TOI Interactive "WE SHOULD HAVE PROMPT ACTION TAKEN AGAINST THOSE WHO MISUSE OPEN SPACES"

Q. Does the Chimbai beach proposal look promising and should more such plans be taken up to improve Mumbai's coastline?

EMAIL: [speakout@timesgroup.com](mailto:speakout@timesgroup.com) with 'Chimbai' in the subject line

SMS: Type SO <space> CHIMBAI Y OR N <space> your views and name. SMS to 58888

LOG ON: to [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com) & visit the Speak Out section

- You can also share your views in the 'Mumbai' section of [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com)
- Or log onto 'The Times Of India' page on Facebook

We asked you if Mumbai needs a better system through which complaints can be made, and prompt action can be taken, against parties that usurp and/or misuse the city's precious open spaces. Here are some of your responses

I had been thinking of who should be contacted if one wants to know if a piece of land is rightly in the hands of builders or not. I've been seeing for quite sometime

now that builders have been preying on Borivli national park. In fact, some two to three years back a building was built after chopping down some portion of the park. These days, I'm seeing some more portions of this national asset getting cleared for building purposes. I wish to understand if this has been authorized by the government and more trees are grown to compensate. I reside in Manpada, Thane and am not aware of the NGO or ALM working in the area.

— Manisha Bindlish

Yes we should have prompt action taken against this. There should also be transparency in the procedures followed.

— Vaishali Shetty

If the BMC is sincerely interested in saving open spaces from encroachment, slum lords and powerful builders, it should display a copy of the Development Plan outside each and every open space, giving the reservation status of the plot. A copy of the DP may also be given to the local ALM to spread awareness among the people.

— Robert Castellino

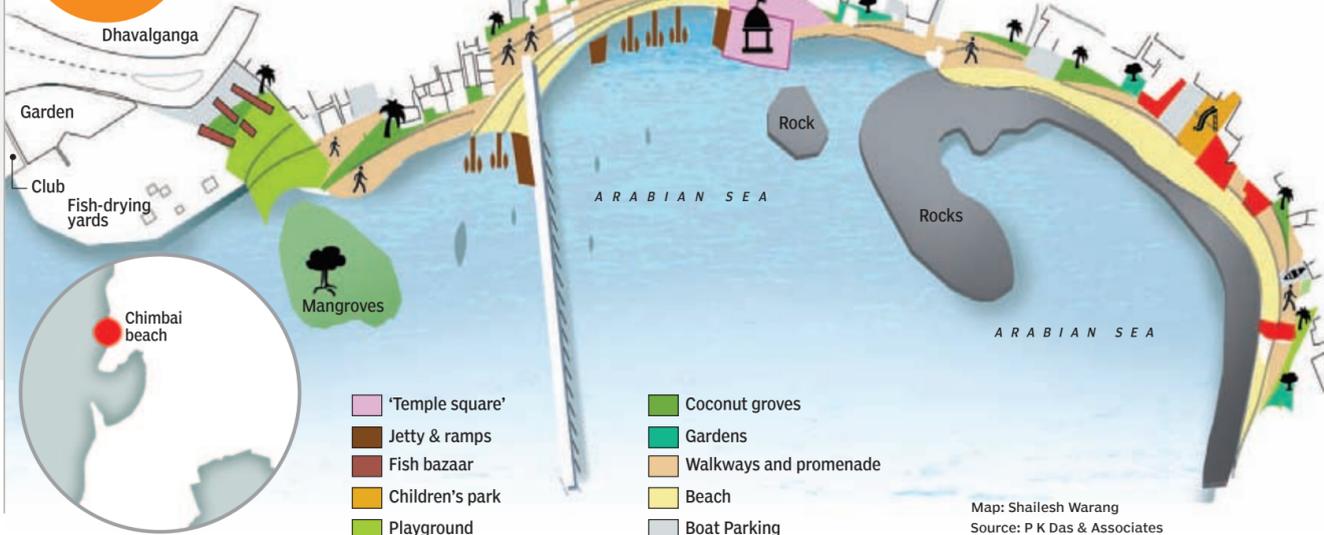
## OPEN MUMBAI

An exhibition on how the city can expand and improve its public spaces will be inaugurated today at the National Gallery of Modern Art by chief minister Prithviraj Chavan. The Open Mumbai exhibition seeks to inform citizens on the amount of public spaces Mumbai can have across parks, grounds, beaches, rivers, plazas, sea fronts, hills and so on. The event will continue from March 16 to April 7 from 11 am to 6 pm daily, except for Mondays and national holidays. Maps, charts, statistics and detailed proposals for the future, like for beach nourishment and cycling tracks, will be displayed.

## SAND, SHORE AND LONG WALKS

### Chimbai beach beautification plan

**BMC BUDGET**  
₹2 crore in the last budget of February 2011



Map: Shailesh Warang  
Source: P K Das & Associates

# Crowd pleasers along the coastline

10 years ago, Bandra residents lit the 'Mumbai makeover' torch by transforming the coastline into promenades

## SEA CHANGE AT BANDSTAND



In a way, it all began here — one of Mumbai's major citizens' initiatives to transform a neighbourhood into a pleasant environment for locals as well as visitors. A lackadaisical civic government was allowing one of the city's biggest assets, its waterfronts, to deteriorate into dump yards and open-air toilets. The Bandra Bandstand Residents' Trust along with then MP Shabana Azmi and architect P K Das decided to create a sea change.

From 2001 to 2002, the waterfront was transformed into what Das would later call one of the city's "cultural forecourts". The other waterfronts transformed into vital public spaces were Land's End, Carter Road and Juhu beach. The Mumbai Waterfront Improvement Centre, which was formed later, shared the \$100,000 Deutsche Bank Urban

Age Award in 2007 for its efforts to "transform the lives of Mumbai's citizens".

A decade old now, Bandstand is a popular hangout, a jogging spot, a park and a lovers' point. While the area is frequented every evening and on weekends by those seeking an idyllic moment by the Arabian Sea, it also accommodates crowds every now and then when cultural events are held

at the amphitheatre in nearby Land's End.

Bandstand stands as an example in which a simple stroll by the sea can be transformed into a memorable outing thanks to the vision of a few locals and others. Das had said in 2007 that the aim was to turn our waterfronts into "unbarricaded public spaces that are truly open and democratic in nature".

## PAVING THE WAY AT CARTER ROAD



The Bandra promenade story began in 1998-99, when local residents had approached the Bombay High Court to disallow permission for a stranded ship, the Zondong, to be converted into a floating hotel. They argued that it would harm the environment and the coast and adversely impact the locality.

Then MP Shabana Azmi later released money from her MPLAD funds to develop the Carter Road and Bandstand promenades.

The endeavour was fraught with more battles, but the residents' perseverance reaped rewards. "The entire exercise — from conceiving the project to getting multiple permissions to supervising construction to obtaining sponsorships — has been a frustrating and time-consuming process, but

worth it," Roshan Dabhoiwala, a trustee with Bandra West Residents' Association, had said in 2007.

The picturesque Carter Road promenade is today a hotspot for many Mumbai-baikars seeking a laid-back evening by the sea and walkers and joggers. It also boasts of an annual festival, an open-air amphitheatre and preserved mangroves that

get dramatically silhouetted against the sunset. The mangroves, once abused as a dumping ground, are a focal point at the Carter Road seafront. The redevelopment meanders around them and the mangroves' night-lighting provides a different perspective. Residents say the promenade has protected and helped the mangroves regenerate.

## SHOWTIME AT LAND'S END



The third major project along the Bandra coast to be taken up for redevelopment transformed the southern tip of the suburb into, among other things, a hub for cultural events. The amphitheatre at Land's End has hosted many music concerts, dance performances and stage shows, and is also the venue for the Celebrate Bandra festival.

Land's End is a peninsular strip that juts into the sea. It holds a fort, which is a heritage precinct, at its tip and a hill that comes below the vista of the fort. At a height of about 20 to 35 metres from the sea, and bounded by the Mahim Bay and Arabian Sea, it commands a sweeping view of the coast.

The project, undertaken by the Bandra Bandstand

**LAND'S END RESTORATION**  
Area: 18,000 sq mt  
Makeover cost: Rs 90 lakh  
Construction period: 2002-03  
Structures and restoration: Arup Sarbadhikari  
Project undertaken by: Bandra Bandstand Residents' Trust in association with then MP Shabana Azmi and architect P. K. Das  
Funding: Shabana Azmi MPLAD scheme and others  
Key features: Retained as a historical precinct | An active public place with lighting and signage | Some landscaped spaces and pathways | A large amphitheatre and stage in the midst of palm trees for hosting cultural shows and art exhibitions

Residents' Trust, included afforestation. Earlier, most of the palm-tree lined, sloping stretch had already been excavated and destroyed for private purposes, leaving a clutch of trees, some overgrown ruins and untended patches.

— Linah Baliga

Uma Kadam

# BAYSIDE PROMENADE IS SEA LINK'S LATEST FEATURE

## 1.5Km Green Strip Along Mahim Bay Will Have Bollywood Celebrity Walk, Open-Air Theatres, Jogging Track, Picnic Spot And More

Linah Ballga | TNN

Come June and Mumbaiers who visit the Bandra-Worli sea link for a drive will have more options for leisure and recreation. A Rs 9-crore promenade is expected to open on the Bandra approach to the iconic bridge, giving the suburb another public space to add to its kitty.

The promenade along Mahim Bay will extend from the causeway to the sea link and aims to cater to all age groups. It will house a jogging track, a meditation zone, an open-air theatre, a sundial amphitheatre, a Saptdeep Stambh (or seven columns depicting the seven islands that formed Mumbai) and a Bollywood celebrity walk. A Bastion of Eternity, yet to be built, will depict a fort-like structure at the sea-link end of the promenade.

Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) officials said that seating areas and sit-outs are also part of the plans. A median of the promenade, called the Silver Drive, will have plants that reflect silver light.

If all goes according to plan,

the state government's initiative would give Mumbaiers a welcome bayside area to escape the daily grind, with a view of the cable-stayed sea link to boot. Officials said the contract has been awarded to D B Realty, which will maintain the promenade for 15 years and pay Rs 99 lakh a year to MSRDC. While facilities will be free for the public, the plan allows the firm to rent out 62 plaques for advertising.

Till about two years ago, the corporation was maintaining the garden along the approach to the sea link at Bandra Reclamation. But the MSRDC later decided to outsource the space to a private player to develop into a promenade. The promenade will stretch for approximately 1.5km and will be up to 40m wide.

"The best part about this promenade is that there are no entry fees," said Nandakumar Gavkar, executive engineer, MSRDC. "There will also be an eating area, like a picnic spot, where people can bring food to eat."

The MSRDC plans to lend a portion to the Bandra Reclamation Area Volunteers Organisation (Bravo) for cultural activities.

### LEISURE BY THE BAY

**Waterfront length:** 1.5km  
**Makeover cost:** Rs 9 crore  
**Expected completion date:** June 2012  
**Development & maintenance:** D B Realty for 15 years, with MSRDC being paid Rs 99 lakh a year

**Key features:** Jogging track | Meditation area | Open-air theatre | Sundial amphitheatre | Saptdeep Stambh (seven columns depicting the seven islands that formed Mumbai) | Bollywood celebrity walk | Bastion of Eternity | Sit-outs | Silver Drive, with plants reflecting silver light



# Bandra's 'democratic' seafronts are cosmopolitan

Linah Ballga | TNN

Who would think that the fate of a ship called the MV Zhen Don would get tied up with the quality of life in not just Bandra but all of Mumbai? Back in the late 1990s, the ship carrying oil and sludge was grounded off Carter Road. Plans to turn it into a floating hotel (floatel) drew wide protests from local residents, who moved court and won the battle to preserve the coastline.

Since then, it has been more or less smooth sailing for the Bandra West Residents' Association (BWRA), which has developed and maintained the Carter Road promenade, and the Bandra Bandstand Residents' Trust (BBRT), which developed the Bandstand waterfront and restored Land's End.

What the residents have done is create public spaces that are not exclusive. People from all walks of life, communities and cultures avail of these seaside havens. The promenades are "democratic", which is the quality architect P K Das feels open spaces in Mumbai should have. The residents, with help from the Mumbai Waterfronts Centre and others, transformed areas that were virtually being used as dumping grounds. Today, joggers, walkers, senior citizens, families, evening strollers, couples, children and youths get to enjoy the beautified shoreline.

Old-timers say the Carter Road promenade is a unique example of a four-corner relationship that worked with no help from the BMC or the state. It was a partnership between citizens, an MP, design professionals and a commercial agency.

The promenade opened in January 2002 and recently completed a decade. BWRA chairperson Darryl D'Monte notes, "Unlike many other open spaces, this one is far more democratic. It doesn't bar people by imposing entrance fees or have any other form of restraint. It's much more inclusive than any other development." He adds, "I

remember singer Shaan performing and that children with bare feet came and started dancing with him. All communities and people use such kind of spaces. These promenades are for people from across all classes who have existed cheek by jowl."

Apart from creating public spaces for everyone, Bandra's promenades have also improved the quality of life for locals. The Celebrate Bandra festival would not have been possible without the Land's End restoration and its amphitheatre and the Bandstand promenade. For residents, it is a coming together of past and present. "It has provided space for cultural activities in Bandra. It was like further enhancing the use of that space," says D'Monte.

The upkeep of the promenades is not easy, and the generosity of corporate sponsors and others has to be relied on. "We have sponsors. We spend nearly a lakh a month," says Roshan Dabhoiwala of BWRA. "Rs 30,000 is spent only on the gardens along the promenade. Recently we revamped the children's play area. New equipment has been installed — swings, slides, seesaws, a merry-go-round." The sponsors are now planning to put in Disney figures and 12 new benches. She says private firms, the BMC, ONGC etc have all been chipping in to help.

The maintenance of the Bandstand promenade is entirely managed by the BBRT. It costs Rs 70,000 to Rs 80,000 a month and the residents raise the funds by collecting Rs 20 a month from themselves. Corporates look after the gardens, but security and maintenance is completely in the residents' hands.

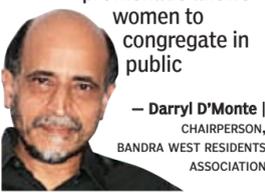
The BWRA manages the Carter Road promenade from Otter's Club to the amphitheatre, but a motley band of residents formed the Khar-Bandra-Santacruz (KBS) Foundation in 2009 to extend the promenade to Khar Danda (another 150 metres). Apart from being a recreational centre, "it's a great boon to people in the area," says Anandini Thakoor, former chairperson, KBS Foundation. "It was a challenging job, because we took funds from politicians to the tune of Rs 45 lakh. In the future,



Hemant Shirodkar

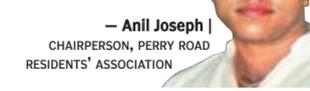
LABOURS OF LOVE: Constant upkeep and maintenance by residents have been key to preserving the beauty and lushness of Bandra's popular seafront promenades

"The Carter Road promenade is like an enclave, which gives it its special character. There are not too many places where women can go alone easily. But at this promenade, they have forged friendships. From a gender perspective, it is important, as the promenade allows women to congregate in public



— Darryl D'Monte | CHAIRPERSON, BANDRA WEST RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

"The promenades have quadrupled traffic flow into Bandra from neighbouring areas, because all want to use the promenades in the evenings. Consequently, Bandra's roads, already burdened by traffic, get choked. Also, I dislike that a good clean open space like the Carter Road promenade is used for music performances and plays. I prefer if that is done in auditoriums



— Anil Joseph | CHAIRPERSON, PERRY ROAD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

we wouldn't want to make use of any politician's funds. Had we collected funds on our own, they wouldn't have been misused. So that's a lesson we have learnt," says Thakoor.

The extended promenade boasts chess tables and a gazebo, which provides underprivileged children a place to study and shelter during the monsoon. Lighting is battery operated. "We wanted to regularize the drying area for fishermen, but we couldn't hold talks with them," says Thakoor.

Das, who designed the major promenades, says, "People of all classes intermingle and share the spaces equally. This has contributed enormously to the community life of the area and their cultural and social life as well. For example, slumdwellers, fisher-folk, women, children and senior citizens share the space and it has been a great social equalizer and truly a democratic space. That's the hallmark of these promenades which are not barricaded and open."

# Open space exhibits give hope of better city: CM

Linah Ballga | TNN

This exhibition shows us a Mumbai which we did not know existed. It has given us hope and we can implement some of the ideas with political will. It is possible to reclaim the lost glory of the city." These were the words of chief minister Prithviraj Chavan at the inauguration of the Open Mumbai exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) on Friday.

The exhibition highlights the tragedy of Mumbai's shrinking open spaces and seeks to generate a dialogue between citizens, the government, professionals and organizations that work for social, cultural and environmental change. The exhibition, hosted by the Union ministry of culture, NGMA, the Mumbai Waterfronts Centre and architect P K Das and Associates, focuses on redefining the notion of open spaces to go beyond gardens and recreational grounds. It proposes the effective use of all natural assets, including rivers, mangroves, creeks

Hemant Shirodkar



GREENING THE BIG CITY: (From left) Former MP Shabana Azmi and chief minister Prithviraj Chavan with architect P K Das, who on Thursday described proposals for expanding Mumbai's public spaces at the launch of the Open Mumbai exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art

ponds, wetlands and beaches. "Mumbai's Development Plan (DP) will be finalized in a couple of years. We can integrate some of the grand ideas here into the next DP, which would be great for the city," said Chavan.

Among others present were BMC chief Subodh Kumar, police commissioner Arup Patnaik, principal secretary to the CM Ashish Kumar Singh, principal secretary (housing) Gautam Chatterjee, nominated Rajya Sabha member Javed Akhtar and actor Shabana Azmi.

Azmi, who earlier as MP gave funds to develop promenades, said, "This exhibition redefines land use and development and puts people at the centre of development, not just real estate developers. What it does is open up democratic spaces where people become the centre. It's crucial to generate a dialogue.... It is essential that people claim ownership of open spaces." She said Akhtar would use Rs 28 crore in Juhu.

Chavan said, "Mumbai's population has seen slower growth, which is dangerous. We are facing a challenge in the inland city. There are also long commutes, which turns people off. We need to create a socio-environmental infrastructure, which is not there. We cannot remove people who come from the interiors of the state or other states to Mumbai, even if others want to do so for populist reasons. We need to have a concerted effort to reclaim our city." The exhibition will continue till April 7.

### TOI Interactive

**Q. The Bandra promenades were built on neglected lands that were being misused, including as dumps. Should more Mumbaiers embark on similar initiatives to develop recreational areas for people from all walks of life?**

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### 'IF SUCCESSFUL, THE MODEL TO REVAMP CHIMBAI BEACH SHOULD BE REPLICATED AT ALL BEACH FRONTS IN THE CITY'

**We asked readers if the Chimbai beach revamp proposal looks promising and whether more such plans should be taken up to improve Mumbai's quaint fishing villages and coastline?**

**Y**es, the Chimbai beach proposal does look promising and we need more such plans to improve Mumbai's coastline. However, the builders with vested interests and the authorities are indifferent to the need to protect Mumbai's coastline. They make it extremely difficult to execute beautification plans along the coast. ALMs and NGOs need to create awareness amongst the local residents so they come forward and actively protest against violations of

Coastal Regulation Zone norms. Mumbai's coastline is too precious to fall prey to illegal construction and garbage dumping. — Vijay Mullaji

**W**e live in this neighbourhood and this is something we've been hoping for. — Jyothi

**N**o, originality has its own natural charm. — Shruti

**I**t's good that the beach front in Bandra is being beautified and one will be able to take a walk in Chimbai in improved surroundings. However, there has been no provision for toilets at all these places. This should also be a part of the beautification plan. The

same goes for the promenades at the Carter Road and Bandstand areas. — Anthony

**Y**es, I fully endorse the improvement of Mumbai's coastline. — S Mukherjee

**Y**es, we need more such plans for open spaces across Mumbai. — Sanjay C

**T**he public can rejoice only when the revamp of Chimbai beach finally becomes a reality. However, this will also result in an increase in pollution if proper steps are not taken for cleanliness and waste disposal. Along

with the beautification, attempts should be made to maintain cleanliness and punish those who flout norms. On-the-spot fines, to some extent, would help restrict the nuisance and generate funds for the future maintenance and development of the beach. — Sugandhi Ramani

**T**he plan to beautify Chimbai beach with walkways, a promenade, gardens and a unique weekend bazaar — where the local fishing community can serve fried fish, curry and tandoor — is a great idea. If successful, this model should be replicated at all beach fronts across the city.

— Robert Castellino

**Slice of The Raj**

When ships enter Mumbai's harbour, the Gateway of India welcomes them. The iconic monument was conceptualized and built during the British Raj to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Bombay. The foundation stone was laid on March 31, 1911, nine months prior to the royal visit, by then Governor of Bombay Sir

George Sydenham Clarke. Architect George Wittet's design for the historic monument was sanctioned in August 1914. For five years, up to 1919, land on which the monument was to be constructed was reclaimed, and new sea wall was built. The foundations were completed in 1920, and construction was finished in 1924. The Gateway of India was inaugurated on December 4, 1924.



**DOWN THE YEARS:** The Gateway plaza in 1962, when it was bare, and in 1976 (right), when the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj garden was inaugurated



**Interesting Facts**

- The last British troops to leave India, the First Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry, passed through the Gateway on February 28, 1948
- It cost the exchequer around Rs 21 lakh to build
- The monument's significance to Mumbai and India has made it susceptible to terror attacks. On August 25, 2003 a bomb exploded at the Gateway of India killing 16 people. The structure, however, remained intact

**Grand Plans To Transform The Iconic Plaza Were Hit By Squabbling, Govt Involvement & Security Concerns After 26/11**

**GATEWAY NOT QUITE A GETAWAY**

Clara Lewis | TNN

The Gateway of India stretch is a pedestrian plaza today. But four years ago, before its makeover, the plaza area was a narrow strip. The garden on the plaza was large with lawns, but barricaded. Parking was chaotic and a toilet block was bang in the middle of it. While all this is in the past and more space has been created for people to enjoy the waterfront, the quality of the historical precinct's restoration was dented by ego clashes and government interference, rue residents. The government also restricted public movement in some areas after 26/11.

Several of those involved or affected by the redevelopment process have called it either a "disappointment" or a "bitter" experience. "They chopped off a lot of trees, the lawns were destroyed, the parking is gone. Today we cannot walk there; tourist vehicles are parked in bylanes and there is horrendous noise even in the afternoons. It's a total mess," said Meher Sanjana, a resident and member of the Colaba-Cuffe Parade Residents' Association.

The Gateway of India—a remnant of the Raj—is a his-

torian monument, not just in Mumbai but across the country. While regular visitors to the Gateway who live in the vicinity agreed that the redevelopment had increased plaza space, "the quality of work is not half as good as Marine Drive," said a resident requesting anonymity.

The residents' association had opposed the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) plan prepared by architect P K Das. They had wanted a combination of the INTACH and Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI) plan prepared by architect Charles Correa. Tasneem Mehta, vice-chairman, INTACH, said the government had implemented the restoration project and they had no control over it. "The quality of work is not good. We did the Bhau Daji Lad Museum where we raised the funds and were able to de-

liver an extraordinarily high quality of work. There are constraints working with government contractors. You have no control as you are not signing the cheques. I am disappointed with the way the work was executed, though we tried very hard," she said.

The idea to restore the Gateway was mooted by the UDRI, which signed a memorandum of understanding with the BMC. The Indian Merchants' Chamber had offered to pay for the restoration as it was its centenary year. UDRI asked Correa to draw up a restoration plan. Around the time the plan was presented to the BMC and the heritage committee approved it, INTACH said it was the plan Correa had prepared for them in the '90s. But UDRI maintained that the new plan drawn up by Correa was different. This led to a bitter battle between the two groups and the state stepped in.

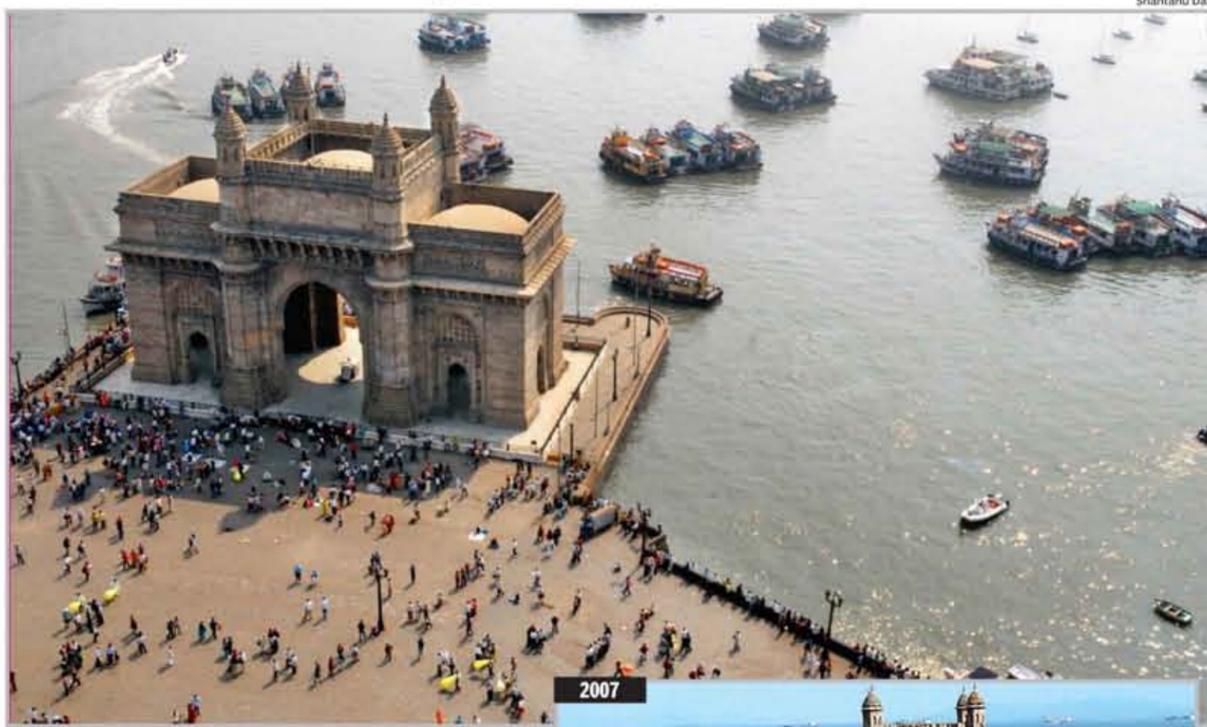
INTACH, in the meantime, approached Das to prepare an alternate plan. The state set up an empowered committee to go through the two plans, and selected Das's plan. The BMC was to bear the expenditure. As the plan was being implemented, it was chopped and changed several times by officials.

As per the initial INTACH plan, the ticket-vending kiosks for ferry tickets and food stalls were to be set up under a raised garden. However, the government decided against it as the MHCC had raised objections. The raised garden was to be like an amphitheatre that would have provided a magnificent view of the monument and the sea as well as accommodate amenities underneath. "We still managed three little tiers. Our weather does not permit an open plaza, you need shaded gardens. We could not avoid the visual block due to space constraints, that is why we thought of the raised garden," said Mehta.

The historic monument is a terror target. On August 25, 2003, a bomb exploded at the Gateway, killing 16 people. The plaza witnessed terror on November 26, 2008, when four gunmen attacked the Taj. At the time of planning, the government had insisted that a car park be a part of the makeover. But post 26/11, it has been sealed. The garden, which was opened for the public, has been barricaded.

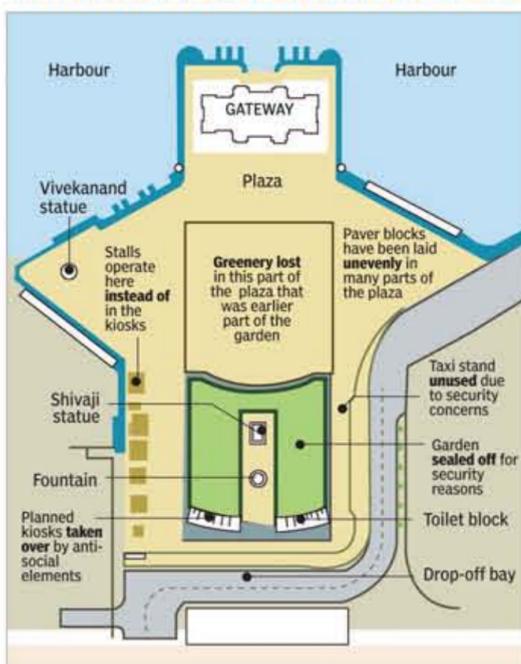
Meanwhile, the kiosks continue to be empty, and the ticket as well as food counters are where they were. The BMC has not moved them as arrears for the present location have not been paid. Four years after the plaza was inaugurated, the BMC is yet to take a decision on these issues. INTACH members said they planned to approach the municipal commissioner to shift the ticket counters to the kiosks. Mehta said they were forced to create the kiosks at this location, "and now they are lying empty and all kinds of elements have taken them over. We were forced to create a car park, and now after 26/11, it is not being used."

Das said that one of the biggest gains of the redevelopment was that it opened up a large public open space and



**PAIN AND GAIN:** The Gateway plaza makeover led to half the garden being removed (the bare lawns at right) to create more walking space

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS: WHY THE PLAZA DOESN'T PLEASE**

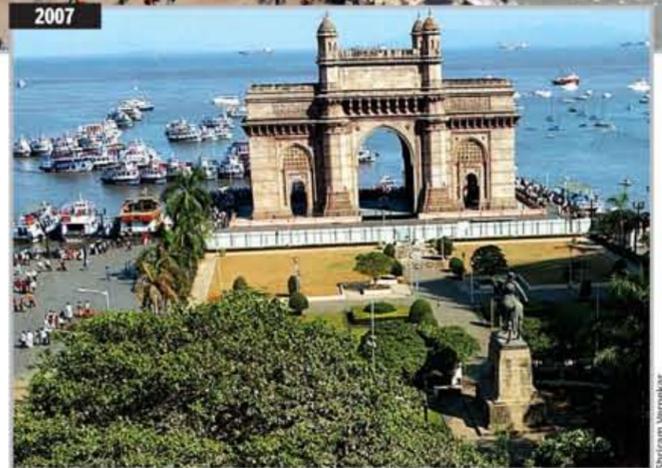


put an end to the "anarchy" there. "There were toilet blocks in a traffic island and another in the middle of the plaza," he said. The redevelopment resulted in a proper parking lot and a garden but security threats sealed these off.

The plans executed were different from those he submitted, said Das. "Due to pressures from the state-empowered committee and otherwise, the plans were compromised. Poor implementation of public projects (there was a single bid) is a fact," said Das, adding that he was concerned about these issues.

► 'People's movement', P 6

2007



**MAKEOVER ALONG THE HARBOUR**

**Area** 3,428 sq m  
**Restored area** | The entire precinct starting from MTDC ticket booths and Aarey Kendra up to 20 metres from the monument | From the lighthouse on the left to opposite the old Taj Hotel on the right  
**Work period** | Feb 2007 to May 2009  
**Makeover cost** | Rs 5 crore (approx)  
**Development and maintenance** | After the state government approved the INTACH plan, work was undertaken by the BMC, which is responsible for the plaza's maintenance

**Bitter Squabble**

The idea to restore the Gateway was mooted by the Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI), which signed an MoU with the BMC. Around the time the plan was presented to the BMC and the heritage committee approved it, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) said it was their plan, which Charles Correa had prepared for them in the 1990s. But UDRI maintained that the new plan was different. This led to a bitter battle between the two groups. INTACH, in the meantime, approached architect P K Das to prepare an alternate plan. The empowered committee, set up by the state government, to go through the two plans, selected INTACH's plan for implementation

It could have been a vast green space, instead the greenery was halved and trees cut. After spending over Rs 5 crore, the work is not upto the mark. In four years, the BMC has been unable to move the ticket and food counters. The confusion near the jetty continues

Vinod Shekhar | FORMER CORPORATOR

Earlier, there used to be a lot of greenery and shade. Today, there are only stones on which you cannot walk easily. People cannot believe that there were earlier around 180 trees in the vicinity of the Gateway. What you have today are only stumps. Anti-social elements have taken over the kiosks.

Remu Javeri | CHAIRPERSON, COLABA TOURIST WELFARE ASSOCIATION

The quality of work is not good. There are constraints when working with government contractors. You have no control as you are not signing the cheques. I am disappointed with the way the work was executed, though we tried very hard

Tasneem Mehta | CONVENER, INTACH

**TOI Interactive 'IF WE MAKE OUR CITY CLEAN & BEAUTIFUL, IT GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE'**

**Q. Has the Gateway plaza makeover fallen short of expectations? Should there be efforts to open the garden, increase parking, use kiosks properly & relay paver blocks?**

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At Bandra, promenades that are today popular with the public were created by residents out of lands that were once neglected. We asked readers if more Mumbaikars should embark on such initiatives to create public spaces. Here are some of your responses:

Yes, I strongly urge all Mumbaikars to embark on similar initiatives to develop recreational areas for people from all walks of life. Such development would prevent encroachment and preserve natural assets like mangroves. But the concern expressed by Mr Anil Joseph (chairperson, Perry Road Residents' Association), regarding increased traffic due to more people wanting to use the promenades, is very valid. Organizers may want to consider this point along with creating adequate parking for vehicles and preventing roadside eateries from blocking main roads.

Yes, after all it's not just your house which should look good, it is important we make our city clean and beautiful. It makes our city look good, promotes a healthy environment and gives us the opportunity to live a healthy lifestyle. Big thumbs-up!

— Manu Thakur

— Jasmeet

**FISHING FOR PROFIT AT WATERFRONTS**

**In India, the transformation of the Chennai waterfront has been hailed as a success story. But across the world, promenades are being developed to create public space while also maximizing economic growth**

**Marina Beach, Chennai**

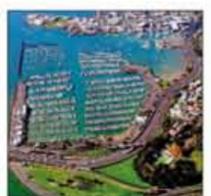
Chennai's 13-km long Marina beach, with a 6-km long promenade, is one of the longest urban shorelines in the world. In 2008, the government sanctioned funds for the promenade's ambitious makeover complete with landscaping, seating arrangements, walkways, plazas, etc. The promenade has 14 sections weaved in a zigzag pattern. Each section has been given a unique makeover so that no two are alike, but architects and planners have taken care to ensure that it is a continuous walking stretch from the Triumph of Labour Statue to the Kamaraj Statue. The walkway ensures a clear view of the beach from the road. Each of the 14 sections has an amphitheatre for



visitors to sit and enjoy the beach. To ensure that the revamped sections do not jar with the rest of the neighbourhood, the architecture reflected that of nearby buildings. The renovation was completed in 2009 at a cost of Rs 259.2 million.

**Auckland Waterfront, NZ**

Auckland city's waterfront is undergoing a massive makeover. On an 8-km stretch, authorities and planners have launched a number of projects, which have been staggered depending on their location. The goal is to maximize the economic potential of the beautiful waterfront and create spaces for the public. The plan includes bringing back historic trams to constructing a continuous pedestrian walkway and cycleway connecting different parts of the waterfront. Beaches will be re-sanded and landscaped. The entire plan is made available on [www.waterfrontauckland.co.nz](http://www.waterfrontauckland.co.nz) for residents to review. Other ambitious projects in the pipeline include a new island and developing a 4.2-hectare public open space in the next five to 10 years. Reports in the local media say that the Auckland's waterfront project is expected to support 20,000 new jobs in key industries and will be a 'major economic driver'.



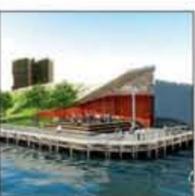
**Dundee Waterfront, Scotland**

The £1 billion 'transformation' of the Dundee Waterfront along the River Tay is one of the UK's biggest development projects, which began in the year 2000, and is expected to go on till 2031, though the official website has charted plans till 2017. Dundee is Scotland's fourth largest city. The focus of the first phase of the project, which is already completed, was infrastructure and included strengthening a railway tunnel. With an eye on the waterfront's economic potential, in 2010, Scotland marked Dundee Port as one of the 'key sites for offshore wind manufacturing and maintenance', reports the projects' homepage [dundeewaterfront.com](http://dundeewaterfront.com). Creating a space for residents is an integral part of the makeover. Planners will be pulling down a structure to create 19,000 sq m of new open space, which can be used by residents for recreation and events. The waterfront will have residential and commercial property, open spaces and recreation facilities.



**New York City Waterfront, US**

New York City's waterfront will be revitalized through a series of projects aimed at maximizing economic development, environmental preservation and public use. According to the local media, this is NYC's first waterfront plan in two decades, and more than US \$3 billion has been earmarked to 'reunite New Yorkers with their water'. The plan includes 130 short-term projects, such as developing more than 50 acres of waterfront parks, building esplanades and so on. Last year, the first 600-foot section of the East River Waterfront (ERW) Esplanade from Wall Street to Maiden Lane was opened to the public. Around \$165 million has been earmarked to develop the ERW alone, and is scheduled for completion in 2013. The two-mile esplanade will have a pedestrian walkway and a bicycle pathway. Boosting the economy of the area is an important part of the blueprint.



Shriram Vernekar

2006



Chittaranjan Tembhekar | TNN

The difference is stark. It initially took Rs 1.4 crore and Rs 1.5 crore to develop the Bandra Bandstand and Carter Road promenades, respectively. Meanwhile, it took Rs 27 crore to beautify Marine Drive. A glance at these promenades reveals an anti-septic, mainly tiled stretch at Marine Drive, while lively, greened walkways wind along the Bandra coast.

Officials of the government-run MMRDA insist that redeveloping the 3-km downtown promenade isn't the same as revamping the 1.2-km and 1.25-km neighbourly stretches in Bandra, but residents and experts say the iconic south Mumbai stretch has been given a colourless facelift. Architect P K Das, who worked on the Bandra projects, says the MMRDA needed to involve local residents more to give the work life and colour.

There is an agreement that Phase II of the revamp would help reflect the character and life of the area, but no concrete steps have been taken to implement it. Ratan Batliboi, architect for the completed Phase I, says, "The best part of the makeover was Phase II, but I have no idea when it will take shape." Phase II involves Art Deco restoration, an eco-walk, subways, amphitheatres, sunset point, underground parking, viewing decks, etc.

Residents remember a time when they had their own plan to revamp the promenade, but the government stepped in with the grand Rs 127-crore plan, of which only 21% (Rs 27 crore of Phase I) has been implemented. Phase I mainly involved creating a tiled footpath, some bus shelters and plant beds. The Rs 100-crore Phase II has now been clubbed with the Nariman Point and CST makeovers, which are unlikely to see the light of day in the near future.

A Marine Drive Council, comprising 13 different resident associations, was formed, but the residents are ignored even today, says Nayana Kathpalia, Marine Drive resident and co-convenor of NGO CitiSpace. "The residents are stakeholders of the project. Why is the state government linking the Marine Drive makeover to the Na-

**TIMES IMPACT: P 11**



riman Point makeover? We have been hearing about the latter for ages and it remains a dream on paper," says Kathpalia. "Marine Drive has a separate character and life of its own and its needs are different from those of other areas." When Phase I started without the residents' knowledge, they stopped work and petitioned the MMRDA to get their suggestions noted.

"People know to speak about their own area and, if involved in projects, can put life into them," says Das. "At Marine Drive, the Rs 27-crore tiled stretch reflects the mechanized uniformity of any government construction. What they have done so far doesn't reflect the life, mood and character of the area. It appears like a dry footpath. If local people's participation is sought, they give alternatives and better ideas and the work reflects their desires and aspirations. There is no mention of the second phase."

State officials say the government is scrutinizing presentations made by architects for the Nariman Point makeover. A few officials say that the dream to beautify the stretch along the lines of those in Miami or Singapore may remain on paper.

Government sources say the 3-km stretch has a bigger promenade and required more tetrapods and other materials than the Bandra facelifts. "The second phase is more impressive and would have made Marine Drive stand apart from other promenades. But it is delayed for now," an official said.

Phase II involves getting environmental and heritage clearances, and the BMC has not secured any. "We hope to treat the road's surface soon after the monsoon," says Aseem Gupta, additional municipal commissioner. "However, looking at the scale of work for the Nariman Point and CST makeovers, the scrutiny of plans will take some time before a decision is taken on implementation."

MMRDA completed Phase I in February 2008 and then abruptly decided to hand over the project to the BMC. This, despite opposition from residents. MMRDA officials said BMC would better manage the work because underground utilities and heritage conservation are in the civic body's purview.

The State Govt Announced Grand Plans To Revamp The Marine Drive Promenade, But So Far Has Delivered Only A Characterless Waterfront. The All-Important Phase II Remains In Cold Storage

Pics: Uma Kadam



2012

**COSMETIC IMPROVEMENT:** The Marine Drive makeover lacks soul, feel many experts. This could have been avoided if residents were a bigger part of the project. Seen below are artist sketches of what the promenade was expected to look like. (Top left) A view of the stretch while work was in progress

**LIFELESS FACELIFT FOR QUEEN'S NECKLACE**



**PROMISES, PROMISES...**



**DREAM ON:** When the Marine Drive makeover was first announced in 2005, the MMRDA was supposed to deliver pockets of green patches at Chowpatty, a fountain with seawater, sleek street furniture, a viewing lift in the Air India building and memorial parks with statues. Mumbai is still waiting for all this

**21% OF WORK DONE**

**FIRST PHASE (COMPLETE)**

**Area covered:** NCPA at Nariman Point to Girgaum Chowpatty

**Total length:** 3km  
**Estimated cost:** ₹30 crore  
**Actual cost:** ₹27 crore, because Churchgate vista, Parsi Gate and eco-walk were shifted to Phase II

**Sea wall:** Cost: ₹4.94 cr | Strengthened with concrete tetrapods, rocks and boulders. Repairs to vertical wall and substructure damaged by waves. Minor modifications with granite

**West footpath:** Cost ₹7.97 cr | Paver blocks, granite and concrete kerb stones laid

**East footpath:** Cost ₹2.69 cr | Paver blocks, flower beds and railings installed

**Service ducts:** Cost ₹3.25 cr | RCC duct for future cables or pipelines under east footpath

**Median:** Cost ₹1.73 cr | Revised with concrete, including pedestrian crossovers

**Bus shelters:** Cost ₹26 lakh | Islands with landscaping. Sit-outs at bus-stops on west footpath

**Chowpatty:** Cost ₹1.19 cr | Beach walkways have paver blocks and landscaping. Not well maintained

**Area below Princess St flyover:** Cost ₹72 lakh | A garden with sit-out facility developed with landscaping. Not well maintained

**Landscaping:** Cost ₹1.96 cr | Small lawns, trees, shrubs, flowerbeds. Not up to the mark

**Lighting:** Replaced the existing light fixtures with modern fixtures, enhancing the architectural and landscaping features of Marine Drive

**SECOND PHASE (YET TO BEGIN)**

**Estimated cost:** ₹100 crore  
**Nariman Point breakwater promontory:** It will extend 280 meters into the sea, culminating in a stepped amphitheatre

**State capital complex:** Approximately 7 acres of hard and soft landscaping will be a grand forecourt to buildings such as the Mantralaya and Vidhan Bhavan. High-speed and low-speed traffic will be segregated to aid pedestrians heading to office and public gatherings

**Art Deco precinct:** Conservation of the second-largest stretch of Art Deco buildings in the world

**Subways:** Planned at four major pedestrian crossings, with entry points having landscaping. Will have toilets and drinking water. Opera House subway will also have retail space

**Chowpatty open-air amphitheatre:** Birla Kreedra Kendra will become an open-air theatre-cum-sunset gallery. Bhelpur-wallahs will be relocated

**Churchgate vista:** Low-level walkway along the sea wall at the Veer Nariman Road intersection

**Parsi Gate:** Revamping pillars and steps

**Eco-walk and parking:** Stainless steel panel displaying information and landscaped walkway. Sprucing up parking areas near gymkhanas on east footpath

**What's second phase status? ask residents**

Chittaranjan Tembhekar | TNN

Even as Marine Drive residents want a say in the second and more elaborate phase of the stretch's beautification, they continue to have "absolutely no clue" about the project's current status.

Chandresh Shah, president, Marine Drive Residents' Association, said that just last week, they had appealed to the BMC officials to take residents into confidence if and when they plan to start work on the Rs 100-crore project.

"There has been no initiative or communication on this front from the BMC authorities since the past two and half years," he said.

When the first phase had kicked off, residents had raised objections to a plan to reduce the footpath's size and create parking lots. They had later protested and stopped work, and got the MMRDA to alter the plans. "We had got it rectified last time. We hope this time, the BMC does not repeat the mistake. It is really upsetting that by the time the second phase starts, the first would have become very old."

Shah also said that the proposed Shivaji statue and memorial in the sea off Marine Drive would attract a huge crowd and, consequently, hawkers and other commercial interests. It may be recalled that chief minister Prithviraj Chavan recently clarified the project would come up off Marine Drive and not Worli. The state has already appointed Team One Architect as consultants for it.

"The promenade would become

a commercial hub with a huge increase in tourists flowing in. The hawkers, cleanliness and security would then become major issues," said Shah.

Anil Bhatia, former hockey player and honorary secretary of the Marine Drive Council, a unified body of all the 13 residents associations, said the state government had formed the council for better coordination. "There are absolute no open spaces between D Road, where I live, and Marine Lines station. There used to be open spaces when we were children but these have been converted into stadiums. The other gymkhanas and spaces are booked all the time for marriage parties," he said. Girgaum residents such as Amit Matondkar point to the lack of parking space, subways, toilets and other amenities.

Ratan Batliboi, the architect who designed the Marine Drive makeover, said the project's second phase would beautify the stretch the most. "I have absolutely no clue about what the administration is doing. There was never even any controversy over the project. Actually, by now, they should have started the implementation."

A former member of the heritage committee said that if the authorities maintain the aesthetics of the buildings along the Marine Drive, there would be no major hurdle in getting clearances for the second phase. However, he said while seeking CRZ and heritage clearances for amphitheatre or sunset point, the authorities will have to be very careful.



There are projects being thought of that would mar the serenity of the area. For example, if the Shivaji statue comes up, the promenade would become a commercial hub with a huge increase in tourists flowing in. The hawkers, cleanliness and security would then become major issues

In the first phase, we (residents) did some changes. Now six years have passed. Certain portions of the Drive at Nariman Point have become a hawkers' zone. I think the time has come for the government to take initiative. There are absolutely no open spaces between D Road, where I live, and Marine Lines station. There used to be open spaces when we were children, but they have been converted into stadiums. The other gymkhanas and spaces are booked all the time for marriage parties

Anil Bhatia, HONORARY SECRETARY, MARINE DRIVE COUNCIL

Why is the state government linking the Marine Drive makeover project to the Nariman Point makeover? We have been hearing about the latter for ages and it remains just a dream on paper. Marine Drive has a separate character and life of its own and its needs are different from those of other areas. I think the Drive should be treated separately, being as it is close to residents' hearts and not a lifeless entity



Nayana Kathpalia, RESIDENT OF MARINE DRIVE AND CO-CONVENOR OF NGO CITISPACE

A policy decision was taken a few years ago that the second phase of the Marine Drive revamp should be handled by the BMC. Hence, the local residents who want to know about pending work must follow up with BMC authorities and not the MMRDA



Dilip Kawthkar, SPOKESPERSON FOR THE MUMBAI METROPOLITAN REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**TOI Interactive 'GATEWAY PLAZA HAS THE POTENTIAL FOR BETTER BEAUTIFICATION'**

**Q. Does the Marine Drive revamp lack colour? Should the state consult with residents and immediately begin work on the ambitious Phase II of the project?**

**EMAIL:** [speakout@timesgroup.com](mailto:speakout@timesgroup.com) with 'Marine' in the subject line  
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**We asked readers if the Gateway plaza makeover has fallen short of expectations. Should there be efforts to open the garden, increase parking, use kiosks properly and relay paver blocks? Here are some of your replies:**

Some institution or body of architects should initially lay down a set of standards with specific requirements for materials, timelines, post-completion maintenance etc before any makeover is attempted in future. — Kiran

The Gateway plaza has the potential to be beautified in a much superior way. I think this initiative should be preferably undertaken by INTACH with the help of an established heritage conservation architect. Relaying of paver blocks is a must, a car park will be convenient, a lawn will add to the visual delight. There should be 24-hour security. — Bikram Banerjee

When abroad, I have always seen how passionately other countries preserve, beautify and maintain their historical places. The Gateway makeover has fallen way short of expectations. Genuine efforts must be made to beautify the garden and

use kiosks for the intended purpose, and maintain these. — Hemangi Sawant

A 'drop-off zone', which is parallel to Mahakavi Bhusan Marg (Adam's Street), was created to ensure taxis and cars don't stop in the middle of the road. Instead, the zone has been turned into a car park for AC taxis and VIP cars. The original road has been narrowed down to half its width. Innumerable carriages, taxis and huge tourist buses are allowed to park, thereby blocking half the road. To make matters worse, a BEST bus stop has been put up in a corner. Nowhere in the world will you have a bus stop without a pavement. — Cyrus Heerjee

**TRACKING THE PROGRESS**

**December 2004:** Work on strengthening sea wall begins as part of Phase I of Marine Drive makeover  
**October 2005:** MMRDA announces ₹130-crore makeover. Phase I is to cost ₹30 crore, Phase II Rs 100 crore. BMC gives no commitment on sharing costs  
**January 2006:** Beautification of Marine Drive starts with first 10 metres of the promenade near Princess Street flyover  
**April 2006:** The ₹130-crore Marine Drive refurbishment plan — which envisaged new sidewalks, special illuminations and street furniture, and an open air amphitheatre — is inaugurated  
**April 2006:** Heritage experts raise objections and ask authorities to keep the promenade beautification simple. They also oppose the

move to refurbish Art Deco buildings  
**January 2008:** The first phase, which was supposed to end in January 2007, is finally ready  
**February 2008:** MMRDA hands over the second phase to BMC which has heritage committee to deal with heritage issues and also may have the knowledge and the machinery to deal with underground utilities  
**Status:** But, BMC is yet to come out with a design or a tender for the second phase

**First Steps Being Taken To Revitalize Coast, But Availability Of Sand, Uncertainty Of Cost & Environmental Concerns Plague Project**



**REBUILDING THE COAST**

**DEBATE: IS NOURISHMENT VIABLE?**

**IS BEACH NOURISHMENT THE ANSWER TO CHECKING SAND EROSION AT THE DADAR-PRABHADEVI BEACH? LINAH BALIGA FINDS OUT**

**Genesis of the plan:** Architect P K Das submitted a Beach Nourishment Plan (BNP) to the BMC for a 1.2-km stretch of Dadar beach (Kirti College to Hinduja Hospital) which was approved in 2003. Das's BNP proposed to restore the beach to a vital, public space and to check erosion. The plan: a) nourish, regenerate and expand the beach; b) redevelop existing approach

roads, gardens, hawkers' stalls, steps, ramps and podia; c) provide public conveniences, general lighting and security; and d) maintain cleanliness by extending sewage outfalls and providing effective solid-waste management. Sand, comprising silt from Mithi River, would be dredged from Mahim Bay, washed and put on Dadar

beach. It would then be covered with a top layer imported from elsewhere in Maharashtra. The plan is part of Das's Open Mumbai exhibition, which is on at NGMA till April 7. The Public Works Department (PWD) has begun testing sand at Mahim, but PWD officials said importing a top layer for aesthetic reasons may be too expensive.

**NOURISHING BEACH IS SUSTAINABLE**

We had submitted a report in 2002 prepared by Dr Z S Tarapore, ex-director of Central Water Power and Research Station (CWPRS), who brought to our notice that sand can be dredged from Mahim Bay. The final report by DHI Water and Environment, Copenhagen, was submitted in 2003, confirming this. We spent Rs 25 lakh, through privately mobilized funds, for the study. Ironically, the PWD and BMC are now spending the same amount for the same work.

Fugro Survey India Ltd and DHI Water and Environment did the first deep-sea survey (bathymetric study) and wave-pattern study. After that, DHI did hydraulic and coastal studies, wave modelling and hydro-dynamic modelling to see the viability of beach nourishment. Now, the PWD report can formally establish if sand can be used from Mahim Bay. The sand would be dredged with a pump, laid along Dadar beach and then the geo-tube technology would be used. It's only the top sand, needed for aesthetic purposes, that needs to be brought from outside.

This BNP is environmentally sustainable and supportive. It doesn't involve civil construction or construction of sea walls, which are detrimental to coastal protection. It is also cost-effective. It takes less time to implement a BNP as compared to civil construction methods. Moreover, you'll get a natural beach as a public space at a location that was originally the heart of Mumbai's central district.

The cost of replenishing lost sand is small when compared to the cost of repairing sea walls. We have given a calculation for replenishing the sand every three to five years.

BNP is used in most parts of Europe and the United States. In India, INS Hamla (Marve), Dahanu beach and Vishakapatnam are examples of beach nourishment. This isn't a new science. In fact, many countries have banned sea-wall construction for being environmentally detrimental. Nourishment re-establishes the natural wave patterns and ecological systems in which sand is regenerated to protect our coast. So you're bringing natural conditions back.



**P K Das, ARCHITECT & WATERFRONT RESTORATION EXPERT**

Our concern is that whatever is done should be done in a synchronized manner. The right hand should know what the left hand is doing. They have put boulders at some places and tetrapods in other places. To overcome the high tide, some places have a retaining wall. So, what's the bund for? We don't want a haphazard job. The citizens' opinions should be considered

— **Tasneem Shukul** | G-NORTH CITIZENS' FORUM

If we have to buy sand from outside, our cost may go up to Rs 30 crore. If it's too expensive, we'll find another alternative. So far, this (Mahim sand) is the only solution

— **Santosh Sawant** | HARBOUR ENGINEER, PWD

**REVERSE RECLAMATION TO STOP DADAR EROSION**

The MMRDA and MSRDC have already killed the ecology of Mahim Bay and Mahim Creek, which is an estuary of the Mithi River. The working pattern of the Mithi has been destroyed.

Before reclamation for the approach to the sea link, the marine ecosystem was full of life. Now, when it is dead, they are talking of nourishment, which isn't the right word. It is foolish of the PWD to try and beautify a dead beach. From Mahim Causeway to Bandra Land's End a length of 2.25 km and width of three-quarter km was reclaimed. They started in 1999 and stopped in 2002 when residents complained. But eventually they finished it in patches.

The approach to the sea link should have been a bridge, but it is a road on reclamation. It was recommended in government reports that there should be in-situ conservation and not reclamation. There was the Paranjape Committee report of 1987, Central Institute of Fisheries Education report of 1992 (submitted to MMRDA), state Mangrove Committee report of 1993



**Girish Raut, ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST AND MAHIM RESIDENT WHO CAMPAIGNED AGAINST RECLAMATION IN BANDRA**



Tetrapods have been placed along some parts of the coast to counter the force of the waves

(with NIO involvement); a central government Neeri study in 1994-96 and a 1997 BNHS report for the Union environment ministry.

Despite these reports, the state government went ahead with reclamation. As a result, sand from Worli to Mahim was wiped out because the tide was blocked from entering Mahim Creek and started hitting with force elsewhere. At the same time, the Mithi River was blocked from entering the Arabian Sea. The sandy bed present for centuries eroded. The flushing of Mahim Creek, which receives 80 crore litres of sewage and chemicals a day, was stopped. The creek turned into a toxic pond. As per the topography and slope, the creek moves towards Mahim Bay and the Arabian Sea. Dadar, Mahim and Prabhadevi beaches were harmed. There was also loss of stabilization on the shore. To make matters worse, some agency removed thousands of trucks of sand from the north side of Mahim Bay two years ago. Nobody knows where they took the sand. The solution is to go to the root of the problem and remove the reclamation from Mahim Causeway to Land's End and build a bridge instead of a road. Sand deposition will return to its original form. Also, if you bring in sand from Ratnagiri or Dahanu, you will deprive their ecosystems. Sand isn't a dead material, it's a life-form habitat. Beach nourishment will not help filter toxic elements and provide a habitat for life forms.

**RECLAIMING LEADS TO MORE PROBLEMS**

Beach nourishment is nothing but reclamation. So, if you reclaim somewhere, repercussions will be felt elsewhere. Take the case of the sea link's approach road. Reclaiming the eroded area will only erode some other beach. In Chennai, nourishment was done at Marina beach and its repercussions were felt in a fishing village that was a few miles away.



**Ashok Ravat, SHIVAJI PARK ALM ACTIVIST**

**STABILIZING SHORELINE SHOULD BE FIRST PRIORITY**

Worldwide there are many examples of environmentally friendly beaches and beach nourishment done due to erosion—like in Singapore, the United States and Europe. But the PWD should focus on what its purpose is—stabilization of the shore, beautification, recreation and/or promenades. Stabilization should be the first priority. A study on erosion and siltation should also be conducted, the causes of the erosion should be carefully studied before going ahead with any beach nourishment. All like-minded experts dealing with environment and oceanography should form a think tank and help plan this project.

**Shankar Gajbhiye, SCIENTIST IN-CHARGE, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEANOGRAPHY, MUMBAI**

**SANDS OF TIME STRIPPED FROM Dadar beach**

Linah Baliga | TNN

An ambitious plan to restore the eroded Dadar beach to its former glory has been stalling ahead, with the state Public Works Department (PWD) currently testing the availability and suitability of sand at Mahim Bay. If suitable, the sand would be transported to help nourish 500 metres of beach from Chaityabhoomi to the mayor's bungalow. If that pilot project is a success, then the entire 4-km stretch from Prabhadevi to Hinduja Hospital, Mahim, would be revitalized.

The plans, however, are steeped in uncertainty and controversy, with government officials saying they are unsure of the cost of transporting top-sand to Dadar and some environmentalists saying the beach is today dead because of reclamation at Bandra that should be reversed.

**DIGGING FOR SOLUTIONS**

- The Dadar-Prabhadevi beach is a 4km stretch from Worli Village to Mahim fort. It covers an area of over 50,000 sq m
- The sandy beach has eroded, with most parts rendered inaccessible
- Properties along the beach have been exposed to high tide, so boulders have been dumped to halt erosion
- This affects public movement and adversely affects the coast
- It is being proposed that the beach be restored as a public space and erosion be checked

Source: P K Das & Associates

As it stands, erosion plagues the decrepit Dadar beach, which is today more of a garbage dump than a sandy shore. Architect P K Das first gave birth to the idea of using a Beach Nourishment Plan (BNP) in Dadar, when he gave Mhada and then the BMC a BNP in the early 2000s. The PWD is today working on a Rs 15-to-20-crore Dadar-Prabhadevi plan, with Rs 5 crore expected from the civic body and the rest from the state.

Last year, on May 15, the PWD's coastal wing began a preliminary 'trial bore' study at Mahim Bay to check the quality of sand there. The boring was stopped in December 2011 due to the code of conduct for the civic elections. The tests have been restarted and boring has been completed at six sites. Work is on at another 24.

"Before April 15, we will complete the boring and by April-end we will get the soil investigation report, complete with the type of sand available in Mahim Bay.

After further investigation, we will prepare a detailed report and give it to the BMC," said Santosh Sawant, harbour engineer, PWD.

It is possible that the Mahim sand is found suitable, but for aesthetic reasons the top layer will have to be brought from elsewhere in the state. "If we have to buy sand from outside, our total cost may go up to Rs 30 crore. If it's too expensive, we will find another alternative. So far, this is the only solution," said Sawant.

The PWD has appointed a local agency, Suryantak Constructions, which has a laboratory that specializes in subsoil investigations, to examine the sand at Mahim. The BMC has already allocated Rs 25 lakh for the trial bore investigation. A boring machine is kept on a floating barge and drilled into the subsoil. It then takes samples from 5 to 25 m below the soil.

The report will also be sent to the Central Water Power and Research Station in Pune for the design of geo-tubes for Dadar beach. This high-volume dewatering system helps prevent coastal erosion. The 20-metre-long tubes, filled with sand, would be placed horizontal to the coast about 100 metres from the compound walls of buildings. They would protect the beach from erosion by currents, and also allow only water to filter back to sea while the sand is trapped in the geo-tube. The geo-tube would become rigid and elliptical. It would function like a tetrapod, reducing wave pressure during high tide. It could take three to five years for Dadar beach to be restored.

Sawant said the beach nourishment work will not be awarded to any private agency. "The protection and nourishment of that beach will be done by the coastal division of the PWD. Also, CWPRS in Pune is a central government agency and has experts in waterfronts," said Sawant.

In Phase II, the PWD has plans to convert Dadar's shoreline into a tourist attraction, like at Juhu and Girgaum. There are plans to build a promenade or walkway along the periphery of the beach, with work being carried off by the civic body.

Meanwhile, residents are hoping the government does a competent job. "The government has spent a huge amount installing boulders in some pockets of the beachfront, thereby making them inaccessible. It has spoiled the look of the seafront. Why is the PWD allocating money in bits and installments? Every year, the BMC shells out Rs 75 lakh and appoints contractors to clean the stretch from Prabhadevi to Mahim. The beach, however, continues to resemble a garbage dump," said Ashok Ravat of the Shivaji Park ALM.

Pics: Hemant Shirodkar



**HARD FACTS:** The erosion at Dadar seaface has left practically no sand along the shores

Uma Kadam

Graphic: Shailesh Warang

**TOI Interactive 'WORK ON MARINE DRIVE BEAUTIFICATION'S PHASE-II MUST START'**

**Q. Will sand from Mahim help rebuild the Dadar-Prabhadevi stretch, or do the authorities need to look at other options? Will the beaches dying along the bay ever be revived?**

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**We asked readers if the Marine Drive revamp lacks colour? Should the state consult with residents and begin work on Phase II of the project? Here are some of your replies:**

The Phase-I revamp of Marine Drive was primarily structural and enabling in nature. Phase-II, estimated at Rs 100 crore, is ambitious and comprises all the aesthetic sections of the work which, when completed, will be visible to all. However, the BMC needs to interact with architects and residents. Work must start immediately. — **Bikram Banerjee**

Most buildings that face the Marine Drive wear a sorrowful

look as they have not been painted since long. The blame may lie with the salty air. — **Mahavir Tewari**

The state can spend as much as it wants on parks and statues, to make the Marine Drive more attractive, but citizens will just end up painting the walls red with paan spit and litter the paths. It is a shame that due to the ignorance of a few, cities are deprived of a clean environment. — **Karl Behramfram**

Citizens, With Help From Judiciary, Restored Beach's Glory. But Lack Of Govt Will To Evict Temporary Encroachers Means The Fight Continues



**COAST IS CLEAR:** Residents and activists fought a long, hard battle to restore Juhu beach to being a vital open space for the public. However, as the pictures at right show, the fight never ends as they have to constantly monitor the beach because of the temporary, illegal stalls that constantly crop up in violation of court orders



# WINNING BACK JUHU

## BUT BATTLE TO SAVE BEACH NEVER ENDS

Clara Lewis | TNN

In 2006, Juhu residents won back their much-filmed, fantasy beach from encroachers—hawkers, goons who ran prostitution rackets, and even plush bungalows. They achieved this after a long court battle. But six years on, they battle on to ensure the beach stays in the public domain.

Citizens say the government has little respect for public assets and court intervention was the only way to save the beach. However, the government and police continue to ignore violations at Juhu, despite court orders. Architect and activist P K Das, who had prepared the restoration plan for the beach, mobilized citizens to file a PIL in 2002, saying officials had not taken the restoration beyond evicting some encroachers.

Even today, illegal permissions for various religious functions are granted despite court orders. Films shoots are allowed without the Bombay High Court-appointed monitoring committee's approval. Illegal stalls appear every evening, and prostitution and drug peddling are still a problem.

When Das, through the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, first presented his plan for the beach's restoration in the late 1990s, it was tossed from the BMC to the Airports Authority of India to the collector's office to the Maharashtra Maritime Board. Finally, on the advice of then BMC chief Johnny Joseph, Das brought together citizen groups, and a PIL was filed.

"If the court gives a favourable order then all the government departments will fall in line," Das recalled Joseph advising him. Das, who had just completed the Bandra promenades' beautification, formed the Juhu Vikas Manch. The plan was to restore the historical beach keeping in mind the existing realities, and to re-accommodate the hawkers in a more efficient manner, said Das. He held regular meetings with members of J106, which was later rechristened as Juhu Citizens' Welfare Group (JCWG), the Rotary Club and Lion's Club and other Advanced Locality Management groups.

Back then, the beach, said Hansel D'Souza, president of JCWG, was not visible from the road as it was encroached by hawkers. Even the wealthy, who lived in bungalows, and star hotels had taken over portions of the beach.

In October 2002, the citizens finally filed a PIL in the Bombay High Court. Vish Mada, a signatory of the PIL who attended every hearing, recounts how they met bureaucrats to convince them about the need to restore the beach and not oppose the PIL. The citizens had submitted Das's plan in the PIL, traced how it had been bounced around and demanded its implementation.

The judges did a site visit and ordered a joint survey of the beach. In 2004, it ordered the removal of all encroachments and rehabilitation of the hawkers. It allowed a food court 50 metres away, with a 10-by-10-foot stall for each eligible hawker.

However, for a year, the government did nothing till the residents filed a contempt notice against then chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, said Mada. The court also set up a monitoring committee with every agency associated with the beach as a member. It included the suburban collector, the additional municipal commissioner, the additional commissioner of police, the regional director of AAI and Das as secretary.

The hawkers, meanwhile, filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the high court order, and advocate Shiraz Rustomji had to again fight for the citizens. The apex court not only upheld the lower court's order, but reduced the size of the stalls to six-by-six feet. This was because it had already ruled on the size of stalls for the rest of Mumbai. The hawkers, however, got legal entitlement to their spaces.

Mumbaikars regained 30 acres of beach. Nearly two lakh square feet reclaimed by bungalow plot owners were converted into six gardens. The 80 eligible hawkers were moved to a food court. The tents vanished and so did the temple and other businesses. The JCWG was given the responsibility of developing and maintaining the gardens. Of the six gardens, five have been developed; the space near Ruia Park, is yet to be developed for want of funds.

The revamp was made possible with MPLAD funds from then MPs Shabana Azmi and Hema Malini.

Zahida Banatwala, a member of JCWG who monitors the Gandhi Gram garden, said the open spaces have helped residents bond over morning walks, yoga sessions or just watching the sun set.

D'Souza said that, on average, it costs Rs 50,000 a month to maintain two gardens. The BMC funds an annual contract for beach cleaning. Locals monitor the cleaning and, based on their feedback, the contract is renewed.

In the Open Mumbai exhibition currently on at the NGMA, Das is now proposing a wider plan to link the beach to other public spaces, as well as residential areas and institutes in the suburb. A major part of this plan involves revamping the Irla nullah's banks and creating walking and cycling tracks along the stretch. This work has already begun.

### JUHU REVAMP HOW THE BEACH WAS TRANSFORMED

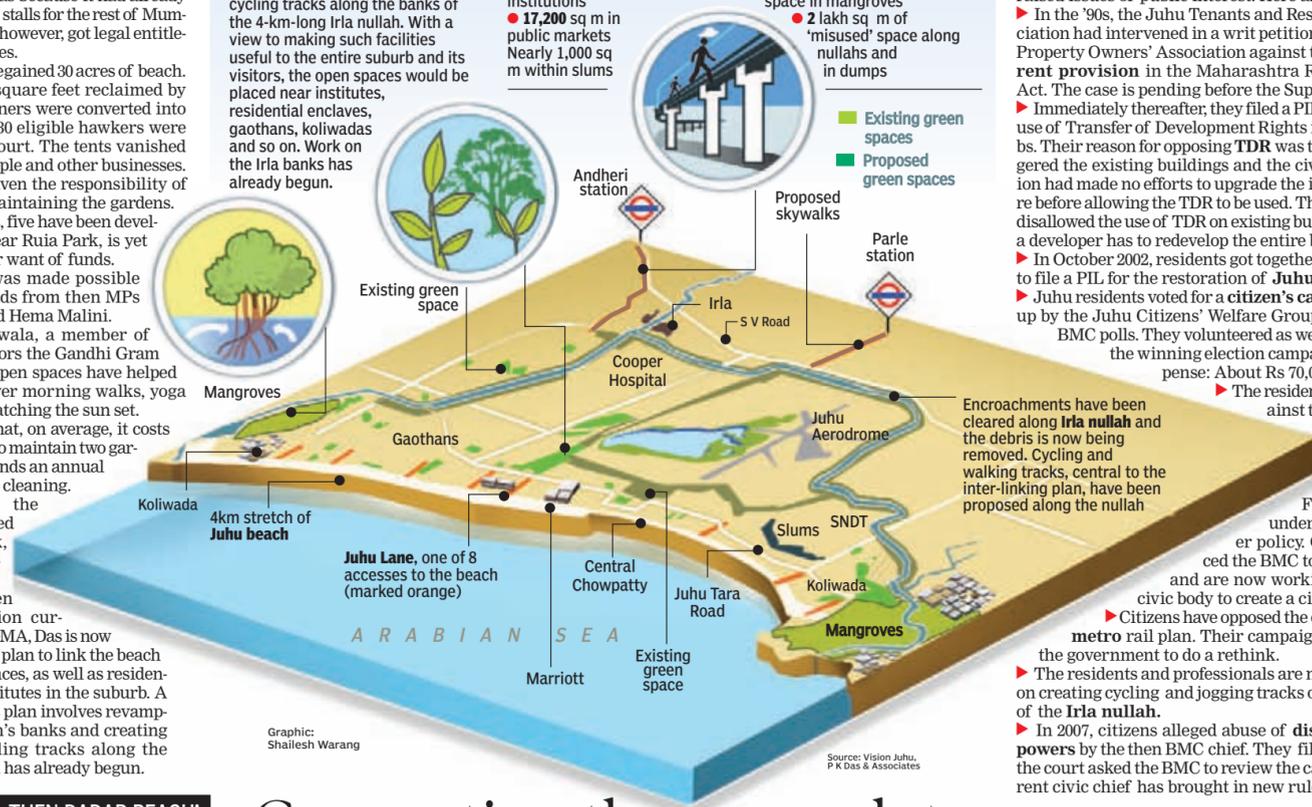
BEACH LENGTH	4 km	● The plan to transform the cluttered, unplanned beach focused on clearing the Central Chowpatty and its encroachments and creating accesses and traffic/parking arrangements	● The plan to transform the cluttered, unplanned beach focused on clearing the Central Chowpatty and its encroachments and creating accesses and traffic/parking arrangements
BEACH AREA	3.1 L sq m	● It involved creating a food court, renovating public conveniences, building a drop-off bay, redeveloping	● The Open Mumbai exhibition proposes that the city take a cue from the Juhu revamp and bring together local residents, professionals and government agencies to create lively, orderly open spaces. The judiciary's help should also be sought, as it was in the case of the Juhu revamp
ACCESS ROADS	8		

### VIEW TO THE FUTURE LINKING PUBLIC SPACES NEAR THE BEACH

In a unique initiative, the inter-linking of all public spaces in the Juhu beach area is being proposed. The ambitious plan would help link the 4-km beach to existing play and recreation grounds in the area, as well as proposed walking and cycling tracks along the banks of the 4-km-long Irla nullah. With a view to making such facilities useful to the entire suburb and its visitors, the open spaces would be placed near institutes, residential enclaves, gothans, koliwadads and so on. Work on the Irla banks has already begun.

#### MORE BREATHING ROOM | Public spaces that could be linked in the Juhu beach area

- 2.7 lakh sq m of reserved public open space
- 18,000 sq m along the edges of large open lands
- 3.1 lakh sq m of beach
- 41,000 sq m at the edges of institutions
- 17,200 sq m in public markets
- Nearly 1,000 sq m within slums
- 15,000 sq m within bus depots
- 4.9 lakh sq m of 'misused' space in mangroves
- 2 lakh sq m of 'misused' space along nullahs and in dumps



Graphic: Shailesh Warang

Source: Vision Juhu, P K Das & Associates

## 'Burb thrives on people power

Clara Lewis | TNN

Its glamour quotient combined with commitment and persistence have helped Juhu citizens notch a number of victories. Utsal Karani, a long-time resident of JVPD who has filed several PILs and participated in various agitations, says media spotlight on Juhu has helped its cause.

"Juhu is a rich neighbourhood similar to Nepean Sea Road, Altamont Road, Bandra, Versova etc and has highly educated residents like the rest. But Juhu is also home to a large number of Bollywood celebrities, so it is constantly in the news," he said. But apart from its celebrity status, its citizens have regularly raised issues of public interest. Here are a few:

- ▶ In the '90s, the Juhu Tenants and Residents Association had intervened in a writ petition filed by the Property Owners' Association against the standard rent provision in the Maharashtra Rent Control Act. The case is pending before the Supreme Court.
- ▶ Immediately thereafter, they filed a PIL against the use of Transfer of Development Rights in the suburbs. Their reason for opposing TDR was that it endangered the existing buildings and the civic corporation had made no efforts to upgrade the infrastructure before allowing the TDR to be used. The high court disallowed the use of TDR on existing buildings. Now, a developer has to redevelop the entire building.
- ▶ In October 2002, residents got together once again to file a PIL for the restoration of Juhu beach.
- ▶ Juhu residents voted for a citizen's candidate put up by the Juhu Citizens' Welfare Group in the 2007 BMC polls. They volunteered as well as paid for the winning election campaign. The expense: About Rs 70,000.

The residents fought against the usurping of a reserved open space by Ronson Foundation under the caretaker policy. Citizens forced the BMC to take it over and are now working with the civic body to create a city forest.

- ▶ Citizens have opposed the overground metro rail plan. Their campaign has forced the government to do a rethink.
- ▶ The residents and professionals are now working on creating cycling and jogging tracks on both sides of the Irla nullah.
- ▶ In 2007, citizens alleged abuse of discretionary powers by the then BMC chief. They filed a PIL and the court asked the BMC to review the case. The current civic chief has brought in new rules.

### TOI Interactive 'FIRST REVIVE MAHIM CREEK, THEN DADAR BEACH'

**Q. Do you think the proposal to create a seamless stretch of public spaces in Juhu — by linking the beach to planned walking/cycling tracks, gardens, playgrounds and other areas — is one the authorities should take seriously and expedite?**

**EMAIL** speakout@timesgroup.com with 'Juhu' in the subject line

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**We asked readers if taking sand from Mahim will help rebuild the Dadar-Prabhadevi stretch, or if the authorities need to look at other options? Will the beaches dying along the bay ever be revived? Here are some of your responses:**

It is disheartening to see the present state of the Dadar-Prabhadevi beach. Dredging sand from Mahim Bay will cause more harm than work as a cure for the dying stretch. Dredging will have its effects on the bay and its surroundings in the years to come. The solution lies in doing two things. First, revive

Mahim Creek. See that the sewage currently collecting in the bay gets treated (by setting up a sewage treatment plant in the area) and is then flushed out. Second, revive the beaches along the Dadar-Prabhadevi stretch. This would already be half done if the first point is followed, as waste deposits along the beaches would reduce and, to some extent, erosion would be checked. Then, the sand on the beaches has to be replenished. The sand has to come from outside and not Mahim Bay. — Alfred Paul Karathra

You have played with nature by reclaiming and are facing the consequences. Get serious before it's too late to get our beach back. — Jack

I do not think that such cosmetic actions are going to help. In the first place, the authorities should act on the reasons that caused the soil erosion. Otherwise, it will always be a matter of 'bolting the stable door after the horse has escaped'. — Kakkannat Mohandas

## Connecting the green dots

Clara Lewis | TNN

Civic activist and architect P K Das terms it as re-imagining public spaces. Two years ago, Das, under the aegis of the Mumbai Waterfronts Centre along with students of the Kamala Raheja Institute of Architecture, prepared a development plan for Juhu.

The plan is unique as it talks of creating open spaces in market places, bus depots, railway station precincts, walkways, cycling tracks along the city's nullahs and networking all to create a seamless stretch of green, enabling citizens to walk and bicycle through their neighbourhood without hindrances and creating several spaces for community interaction.

The greening of the 4-km-long Irla nullah on either side is central to the plan as the nullah meanders through all of Juhu. Das's plan to create cycling and jogging tracks along the nullah has already been accepted by the BMC, which has

earmarked money to develop it. The nullah flows along several reserved spaces. Thus, it helps network them. A citizen walking along the nullah can access all the green spaces without being caught in traffic jams.

The young architects conducted interviews with all stakeholders who use, or wish to

A citizen walking along the Irla nullah's green space would be able to access all open spaces in the region without being caught in traffic jams

use, these informal spaces in Juhu. The spaces that can be inter-linked include reserved public open spaces, the beach, edges of institutions, public markets, bus depots, edges of large open lands, mangroves and so on. They have re-imagined the extent of this informal public realm and found that while the

reserved public space amounts to 21% of the total area, the lived space adds up to 79%, nearly four times more. They have attempted to link up these spaces, although it is not always physically possible. However, "the intention of networking public space is to make each one relate and draw from the other for its survival and/or maintenance. By design, this would ensure that no spaces are lost or denied to the public," said Das.

The transport network is vital in this regard. Accesses like skywalks from stations and the realignment of the proposed metro stations to major arteries are part of the solution. A 4.5-metre-wide pedestrian strip within the Juhu airport area would link presently inaccessible public areas.

The architects derive their inspiration from Boston's Big Dig, a complex urban highway and tunnel project; and Las Ramblas, Barcelona, which has pedestrianized the centre of a popular boulevard.

When we filed the Public Interest Litigation (PIL), neighbours derided us saying the government would never move anyone out. When we did it, we became heroes overnight. I had retired when we filed the PIL. I spent from my Provident Fund, others too used their own hard-earned money to fund the campaign. It was our way of giving to this country when we have received so much from her

Vish Mada | JUHU RESIDENT

There is not enough space for customers to stand, leave alone sit. Business is not what it used to be when we were on the beach. Of course, now that we have a licence, there is no harassment from the police and the BMC

Krishna Ram Meena | STALL OWNER AT JUHU FOOD COURT

# Sena wants BMC to budget for

Linah Baliga | TNN

**Mumbai:** If the Shiv Sena-led Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is to be believed, then it will make an amendment to the newly-announced civic budget to introduce a new header, 'Open

**MUMBAI  
FOR MIE**

Space Mumbai', and make budgetary provisions for the same.

"The standing committee has the right to make amendments to the budget. We will table a proposal to make the

## GREEN ASSETS

A proposal will be tabled before the standing committee to amend the civic budget to make provisions for the city's green assets like mangroves



amendment under the new header for open spaces (natural assets). It will be a five-year plan to protect the city's natural assets; there is already a provision of Rs 2,389 crore for

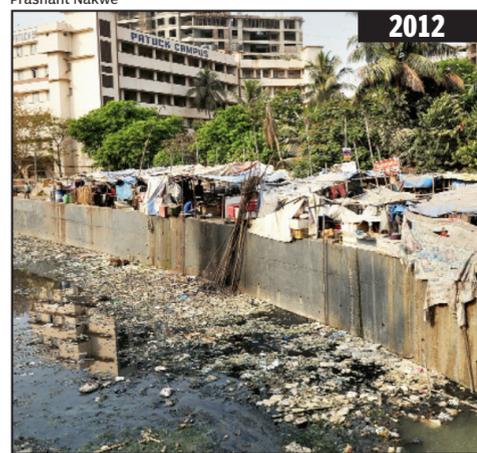
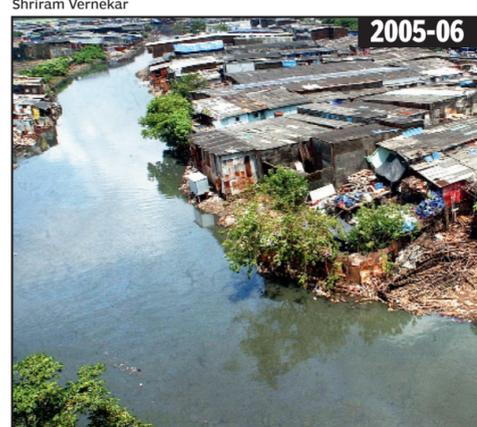
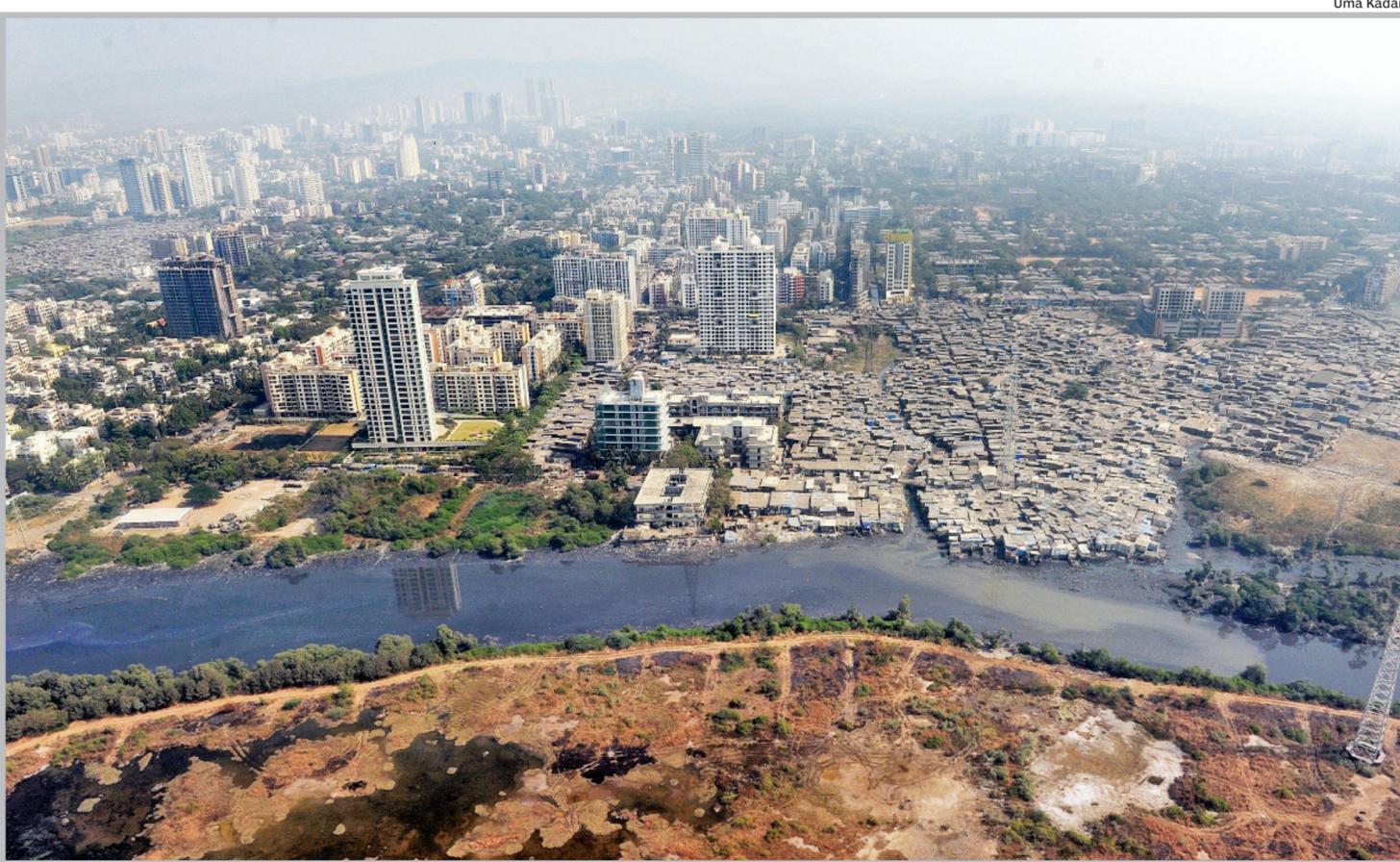
open spaces in the new budget. We could divert funds from this budgetary provision for natural assets like mangroves and creeks," said standing committee chairman Rahul Shewale.

Speaking to TOI at the Open Mumbai exhibition held at the National Gallery of Modern Art on Tuesday, Shewale said a proposal will be tabled to include mangroves in the revised Development Plan as "mangroves are always prone to encroachments".

The exhibition, organized by the Mumbai Waterfronts Centre and architect P K Das, was also attended by mayor Sunil Prabhu and 73 Sena corporators. Addressing Sena corporators, the party's CEO Uddhav Thackeray said, "I called you here as I wanted you to see the exhibition. The manual prepared by Das. Develop a love for natural assets as they are Mumbai's prized possessions."

Mumbai's natural assets include four rivers that, among other functions, serve as natural drains for rainwater. Years of neglect and misuse have narrowed them into stinking nullahs. Is another disaster, like 26/7, waiting to happen?

# We need to rescue our rivers now



**RIVERS OF SORROW:** Slums and garbage proliferate on the banks of the Poisar River, while on the opposite bank greenery has been cleared. (Top right) A view from six years ago of how the Mithi was constricted and (right) debris and garbage in the river today at Vakola

**Pronoti Datta | TNN**

The first time most Mumbaikars learnt of the Mithi River was after the floods of July 26, 2005. The city received 944mm of rainfall in 24 hours and in the floods that ensued 914 people died. The Mithi — till then dismissed as a sludge-filled nullah that generated a powerful stench from Mahim to Bandra, Kurla, Kalina and beyond — was noticed because it had overflowed.

Mumbai has not just one, but four rivers, a fact many are unaware of. Besides the Mithi, there are the Dahisar, Poisar and Oshiwara rivers, all together 23.8 km long and covering 15 lakh sq m. Like the Mithi, the others too have been dirtied and narrowed to the width of nullahs by garbage and effluents that for years have been dumped by slums and industries on their banks. Slums themselves encroach onto riverbanks.

As the floods showed, this can have disastrous consequences. The rivers fulfill a vital function in the city's drainage system — discharging excess rainwater into the sea during the monsoon. Clogging the rivers inhibits the flow of water, resulting in floods.

"You have river flow and you have flood plains," says Janak Daftary, a member of Mithi Nadi Sansad, an organization that serves as a river watchdog. "This is something that is sacrosanct." Daftary says that one of the reasons the Mithi flooded was that its catchment area — Powai Hills — was concretized by construction projects.

"Everyone says the Mithi overflowed," Daftary says. "It didn't overflow. The water which used to percolate in Powai Hills for around six months rushed down in six hours."

Rivers also sustain ecosystems. The Mithi, for instance, is flanked by mangroves that provide a habitat for a variety of birds, insects and marine life. Along the Mithi is the 37-acre Maharashtra Nature Park. The plot was a garbage dump till the early 1980s. It was turned into a park by the MMRDA and the World Wildlife Foundation.

The nature park, the MMRDA says, is today home to migratory birds, more than 200 species of trees and 38 species of butterflies.

"People spend lakhs to go on a holiday to Kerala to enjoy the backwaters," says Dhaval Desai, a member of the Observer Research Foundation, which published a report on the Mithi in 2011. "But it could be available right here in Mumbai."

While the Mithi has been the centre of attention since 2005, little is known about the other rivers. All of them originate in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. The Poisar runs largely through Kandivli. The Dahisar begins at Tulsi Lake and, after crossing the Western Express Highway, flows through Dahisar (West), eventually meeting the Manori Creek. The Oshiwara, like the Poisar, ends at Versova Creek. Both rivers run through dense mangrove territory.

A survey carried out by the NGO Conservation Action Trust after the 2005 flood pointed out that the Dahisar and Poisar rivers, as well as suburban nullahs, were as ill-treated as the Mithi. Slum colonies and buildings had encroached on the riverbeds. This as well as the dumping of waste has severely narrowed the river channels. Laxman Vatkari, chief engineer of the BMC storm water drains department, says that both the Dahisar and Poisar are currently being desilted.

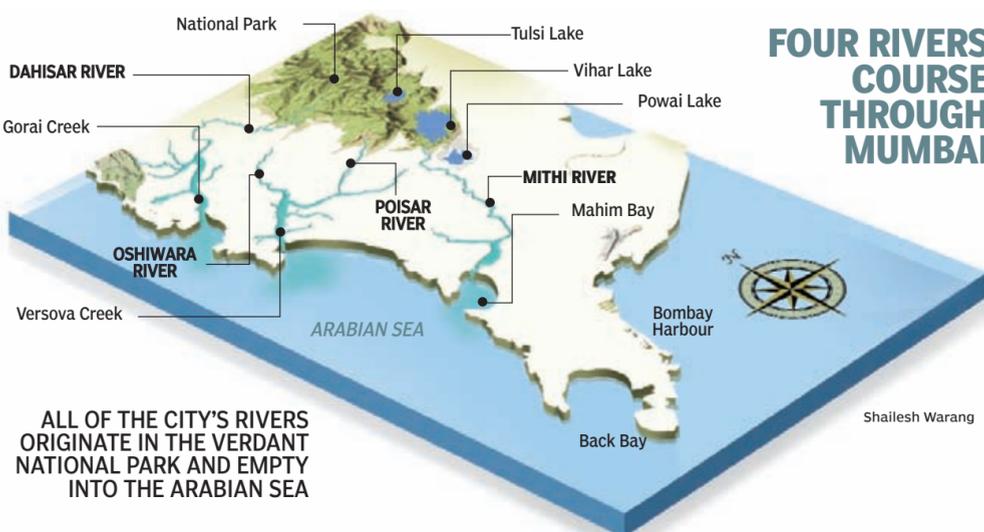
Gautam Kirtane, a member of Observer Research Foundation and chief author of the organisation's report on the Mithi, says the next major flood will involve the Mahul Creek on the city's eastern coast. "It's a disaster in waiting," says Kirtane. "The Mithi and Mahul were once connected. They shared the same flood plain. The Mahul has also been narrowed down."

Activist Anil Galgali agrees that Mahul could be the next Mithi as, after being encroached on by housing colonies and having accumulated silt from sewage, its flow has been restricted. "The sewage from the eastern suburbs, from Mulund to Ghatkopar, goes to Mahul," Galgali says.

An exhibition currently on at the NGMA, Open Mumbai, suggests several measures that could be taken to conserve Mumbai's rivers and beautify their surroundings.

Next installment: Transforming rivers, nullahs

## Rs 790 cr later, Mithi's bitter tale persists



### FLOW CHART

River	Location	Area (sq m)
Mithi	Vihar Lake, Aarey Colony, Powai, Saki Naka, Kurla, Kalina, Vakola, BKC, Dharavi, Mahim Bay	10 L
Oshiwara	SGNP to Versova Creek	2.8 L
Dahisar	Tulsi Lake to Manori Creek	1.6 L
Poisar	Borivli West	0.6 L
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 lakh sq m or 1.5 lakh sq km</b>	

Source: P K Das & Associates

Everyone says the Mithi overflowed. It didn't overflow. The water which used to percolate in Powai Hills for around six months rushed down in six hours

Janak Daftary | MITHI NADI SANSAD

It's a disaster in waiting. The Mithi and Mahul were once connected. They shared the same flood plain. The Mahul has also been narrowed down

Gautam Kirtane | OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

### TRACKING THE MITHI

**Catchment area:** 7,295 hectares  
**Length:** 17.84km  
**Course:** Borivli national park to Mahim Bay  
**Mouth:** Narrowed during Bandra reclamation in 1970s, reclamation for BKC in 1990s and construction of Bandra-Worli Sea Link  
**Alterations:** Has been bent at 90-degree angles in four places during airport extensions from 1976 to 2004  
**On the banks:** Many areas have slums and industries, which dump waste and effluents into the water  
**Most polluted areas:** Kurla-Kalina and Dharavi  
**Clean-up:** After 26/7 floods, BMC and MMRDA began to dredge river to deepen and widen it. BMC is in charge of 7.8km; MMRDA 6km  
**Amount spent so far on restoration:** ₹475 crore (BMC), ₹315 crore (MMRDA)  
**RESTORATION AGENDA:** Removal of silt and widening | Dredging | 11 bridges are to be built across the Mithi, of which four are being built | A 22km retaining wall has been planned, of which 8km has been built

**Pronoti Datta | TNN**

The Mithi River has now become synonymous with Mumbai's battle against floods and filth. Following the 2005 floods, Mumbai awoke to the fact that a river flowed in its midst, a river that quietly over time had helped drain rainwater every monsoon season. But over the years, the city also encroached on the natural asset, choking it with construction and filth, till it swelled and flooded the suburbs.

After the flood, efforts to dredge and widen the Mithi began in earnest. However, six years and Rs 790 crore later, the battle isn't over and activists say only small victories have been won. Many stretches are still clogged with filth.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and state-run Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) took on the task to dredge the Mithi in order to deepen and widen it. The BMC is in charge of 7.8km of the river's length, while the MMRDA is responsible for 6km.

Laxman Vatkari, chief engineer for the civic storm water drain department, says the municipal corporation has so far spent Rs 475 crore on river work. This includes dredging and building bridges and a retaining wall. Eleven bridges are to be built across the Mithi. Of these, Vatkari says, four are being constructed. A 22-km retaining wall has been planned, of which 8 km has been built. The remaining will be built, Vatkari says, after the MMRDA removes 1,500 illegal structures along the riverbank.

D U Gajbhaye, a superintending engineer with MMRDA, says the agency has so far spent Rs 315 crore on Mithi River work. The removal of silt and widening of the river is nearly complete, he says. However, aside from saying work is far from over, activists say that dredging is only a temporary solution. "With the kind of effluents that are being dumped in the river, it's going to fill up before you can bat an eyelid," says Dhaval Desai of the Observer Research Foundation (ORF). The MMRDA has also come

under fire from activists over a portion of the retaining wall. Janak Daftary, a member of the NGO Mithi Nadi Sansad, is part of a PIL against the retaining wall. "The retaining walls stop tidal water from reaching mangroves," he says, pointing out that the wall is not a real solution.

The Mithi River was made the villain following the 2005 deluge, becoming widely blamed for overflowing and causing mayhem in the suburbs. The blame, however, was misplaced. State and civic authorities have for years ignored the sewage and effluents that pour into the river from industries and slums and the successive alterations to its course. All this severely reduced the Mithi's carrying capacity.

The Mithi originates in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) mainly from the overflow of the Vihar Lake. According to the Chitale Committee report, which examined the causes for the 2005 flood, the Mithi's catchment area (across which it collects rainwater) is 7,295 hectares. That's 16% of Mumbai's area.

The river flows for 17.84 km through SGNP, Aarey Colony, Sakinaka, Sahar airport (where it travels under the runway) and Bandra-Kurla Complex before emptying into the Arabian Sea at Mahim. Some of the most polluted areas are in the Kurla-Kalina area and Dharavi, where tanneries, tabelas and recycling units regularly dump solid waste into the Mithi.

Over the years, the Mithi's course has been narrowed and altered by successive reclamations and diversions. The mouth of the river was narrowed by reclamation in Bandra in the 1970s, reclamation of 318 hectares for the BKC in the 1990s and construction of the Bandra-Worli Sea Link. An ORF report says that the reclamations reduced the mudflats around Mahim Creek from 4.47 sq km in 1966 to 1.5 sq km in 2005.

Before the flood, the airport runway was extended. During the construction, the Mithi was bent at a 90-degree angle, restricting its flow. According to the ORF report, the Mithi was bent at 90-degree angles in four places in the course of airport extensions from 1976 to 2004.

### TOI Interactive

### 'WE MUST CLEARLY DEMARCATATE BOUNDARIES OF OUR BEACHES'

**Q. How important do you think are rivers to Mumbai and what measures should the BMC and state government take to protect and transform them? How can citizens and conservation groups also help in this endeavour?**

**EMAIL** [speakout@timesgroup.com](mailto:speakout@timesgroup.com) with 'Rivers' in the subject line  
**SMS** Type **SO** <space> **RIVERS** <space> your views and name. SMS to **58888**  
**LOG ON** to [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com) & visit the Speak Out section

You can also share your views in the 'Mumbai' section of [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com) or log onto 'The Times Of India' page on Facebook  
**We asked readers whether we will get world-class beaches if authorities demarcate their boundaries and include this information in the Development Plan, so that the shores can be protected and revamped in a planned manner? Here are some of your replies:**

Yes, beaches are our precious natural assets. We should really protect them. — Mihir Pandya

By simply demarcating the boundaries of beaches or including them in the Development Plan, nothing is going to change in Mumbai, considering the kind of population it has. Even the educated and the affluent lack civic sense. They are equally guilty in converting the city and its beautiful beaches into an expanse of garbage heaps. Less said the better about the beaches' plight during festivals. No authority has the spine to act, fearing divine

wrath and votes of mortals. — Mukund Kumar

We can get world-class beaches in Mumbai, provided they are properly demarcated in the Development Plan. However, BMC officials lack aesthetic sense. Hence, people of the calibre of architect P K Das who have the good of the city at heart should be enlisted in the planning. — Robert Castellino

We must clearly demarcate boundaries around beaches so that they are not encroached upon as has happened at the beach off Badhwar Park. — Vijay Mullaji

The Mithi gets polluted as soon as it leaves the national park. Within the park, the only pollution is from leaves

that fall from trees. If these are not removed, they become muck. Yet the river is as clean as it can be in the park

—Madhav Chitale |

AUTHOR OF A STATE GOVT REPORT ON MITHI



Call for Mumbaikars to join fight to restore the city's rivers and nullahs and for the BMC to reserve space for public use on either side of the channels

# WE CAN HELP FLOAT HOPE FOR RIVERS

Pronoti Datta | TNN

Mumbai needs to grow close to its rivers, with citizens being able to interact and relax on the banks of these natural assets. This is the dream of conservationists. But, looking at our four rivers today — the Mithi, Oshiwara, Dahisar and Poisar — it wouldn't be amiss to say this dream will remain just that.

This city has mistreated its rivers, reducing them to little more than nullahs along vast stretches. The four rivers have been narrowed and dirtied by slums and factories that line their banks. Garbage and effluents flow freely in the water. Activists say the rivers' restoration, which is key to protecting the ecosystem and mangroves, will not become a reality unless citizens get involved because, after all, it is the citizens who have to first feel pride in their natural assets and also use them to improve their quality of life.

Janak Daftary, a member of the Mithi Nadi Sansad, says that educating even children about the importance of Mumbai's water bodies is crucial. "If people feel the river is part of them, it will ensure sustenance," he says. "There has to be a sense of belonging. It has to begin in the child's mind. You have to allow children to interact with local rivers. Once that happens, the kid might turn to river protection when he or she grows up."

Activists add that authorities are also ignoring the most immediate and critical function of rivers — natural channels for rainwater drainage and flood control. The Open Mumbai exhibition, currently on at the NGMA, suggests that the city's Development Plan include data about the city's rivers and nullahs, and that these channels be then restored, beautified and integrated with neighbourhoods and other public spaces. Riverfronts have the potential to be beautified spaces where the public can relax and unwind, adding to quality of life. Developing river-sides would help protect the channel and opens up the possibility of creating vegetation and tracks for walking and cycling.

The suggestion is that 30 metres on each side of the rivers' banks be reserved as compulsory open space. Around 10.8 lakh sq m of space along the Mithi could then be developed. The Oshiwara River could see 4.3 lakh sq m of development along its banks. The Dahisar and Poisar rivers could see similar development and beautification. In all, 24.4 lakh sq m of riversides would be beautified for public use. Similarly, if six metres of space is

reserved for public along the banks of 17 nullahs, 15.6 lakh sq m of space could be created.

Efforts to reclaim rivers and clean up nullahs are already on at some locations. Since the devastating floods of 2006, Mithi's dredging and desilting has been a work in progress. The revival of the Irla nullah is another example of community-driven development and integration. TOI presented the Irla example in the March 24 edition. Juhu's residents got encroachments around the nullah removed four years ago and procured funding for the plan from the BMC. The project, designed by architect P K Das, envisions cycling and walking tracks along the nullah and connecting the stretch to neighbourhoods and other public spaces, including the beach.

Ashoke Pandit, filmmaker and resident of Juhu who is involved in the Irla project, says that before the monsoon, residents intend to plant 2,000 trees to replace the ones cut by authorities. He adds that the BMC is currently cleaning the nullah and constructing walls along its banks. "It's the citizens' active participation that encourages the system to work," Pandit says. "For instance, we saw a builder covering the nullah five days ago. Within ten minutes, there were 50 citizens questioning the builder. Seven to eight members of the BMC came to question the builder."

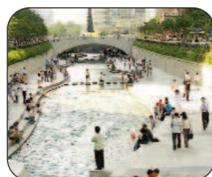
Dhaval Desai of the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) says that even slum-dwellers living along the banks of rivers and nullahs must be roped in to restore and beautify the channels. Ideally, the slums that pollute rivers should be removed. But that's difficult given the "thick nexus between the authority operating there and local politicians and slum-dwellers", he says. Instead, Desai suggests that the government provide garbage collection and sewage treatment facilities to communities along the river. Daftary says, "One way to clean rivers is to use biotechnology. Current sewage treatment plants use inorganic technology that release a cocktail of inorganic materials, like nitrates, carbons and heavy metals, into the water."

Desai says the ORF is working on a plan to get Mumbaikars to engage with the Maharashtra Nature Park in Mahim. The 37-acre park is a patch of mangroves sustained by the Mithi. "Thousands walk in the park, hardly realizing what's on the other side of the road," he says. "We are studying how to make it one of the best maintained parks, comparable to any in the world."



**RIVER OF DIRT:** While retaining walls have been built along the Vakola nullah, an offshoot of the Mithi River, they haven't managed to keep the water free from the filth dumped into the channel

## COURSING THROUGH THE WORLD



### Birds, fish at home in Seoul

The Cheonggyecheon stream in the South Korean capital has been popular with locals and tourists ever since it was opened to the public in 2005 after a major overhaul. In the early 1950s, after the Korean War, migrants settled along the stream in shanties. The river became a dump for the settlements and, in 1958, was covered with concrete. A highway was built over it in 1976. In 2003, the mayor of Seoul decided to restore the stream. One of the successes of the project is the restoration of a natural habitat that attracts birds and fish. However, the project has also been criticized for being too expensive and not entirely beneficial for the city's ecology.



### Olympic makeover in Barcelona

Treated as a drain till the mid-1990s, Besos was known as one of Europe's most polluted rivers. As a reaction to a flash flood in 1962, city authorities had concrete walls built on either side. Industries that came up along the banks dumped waste and effluents into the river. The 1992 Olympics, which took place in the city, spurred the government to turn Barcelona into a financial and tourist centre. Besos was cleaned up and integrated into the landscape of the city. This was done by building parks, walking tracks and cycling paths along the river.



### Seine back from the brink

At the start of the 1960s, the Seine was considered a dying river. The water demands of the numerous industries along its banks had severely strained it. And effluents from farms and industries had damaged its marine life. From 1968, the Seine-Normandie Water Agency began rehabilitating the river by managing its water, reducing pollution by setting up wastewater treatment plants and restoring wetlands.



### Sewer to sanctuary in New York

The Bronx River was treated as a sewer for most of the last century. It was a dump for heavy industries along its banks as well as local residents. In the 1990s, community groups and local politicians collaborated in a plan to revive it and, in 1993, \$30 million was sanctioned for its restoration. The water was cleaned up, fish were reintroduced and parks were created. The river and its banks now draw walkers, cyclists and canoeists.

FLOW CHART			
RIVERS			
Area (sq m)	Area of proposed devpt (sq m)	River plus devpt (sq m)	
Mithi	10 L	10.8 L	20.8 L
Oshiwara	2.8 L	4.3 L	7.1 L
Dahisar	1.6 L	6.6 L	8.2 L
Poisar	0.6 L	2.7 L	3.3 L
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15 L</b>	<b>24.4 L</b>	<b>39.4 L</b>

NULLAHS			
Area (sq m)	Area of proposed devpt (sq m)	River plus devpt (sq m)	
Irla	1.5 L	1.7 L	3.2 L
Kurla	2.5 L	1.6 L	4.1 L
Mahalaxmi	0.3 L	0.4 L	0.7 L
BKC	1 L	1.2 L	2.2 L
Govandi	1.1 L	0.9 L	2 L
Chembur	0.3 L	0.4 L	0.7 L
Ghatkopar	0.7 L	0.1 L	0.8 L
Jogeshwari	0.8 L	0.6 L	1.4 L
Oshiwara	0.4 L	0.7 L	1.1 L
Vikhroli	0.6 L	0.3 L	0.9 L
Mulund	0.3 L	1 L	1.3 L
Kandivli	1.7 L	2.1 L	3.8 L
Borivli	0.6 L	0.8 L	1.4 L
Bhandup	4.3 L	1.1 L	5.4 L
Aarey	1.5 L	1.6 L	3.1 L
Prabhadevi	0.1 L	0.4 L	0.5 L
Dadar	0.3 L	0.6 L	0.9 L
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18 L</b>	<b>15.5 L</b>	<b>33.5 L</b>

## Define, reserve, beautify

Open Mumbai's proposals to conserve and improve rivers and nullahs:

- Define river boundaries in the Development Plan
- Reserve 30 metres on both sides of rivers as compulsory public open space
- Reserve a minimum of six metres on both sides of nullahs as compulsory public open space
- Limit construction to public conveniences, like toilets, drinking water fountains & security/assistance booths
- Permit landscape development to paving, walkways, plantations, seats, lighting, signs, drains, cantilever decks, railings and retaining walls with porosity

## Greening the Grey

Open Mumbai has proposed developing leisure areas along Mumbai's rivers, so that the public can get some space to relax in neighbourhoods and other pockets. Below is a graphic impression from Open Mumbai of how the banks of the Mithi in the BKC area could be transformed, so that the river is protected from encroachment and littering, the mangroves are conserved and people have greened, public zones within which to relax and unwind.



Graphic: Shallesh Warang

## After leaving park, rivers get polluted

Pronoti Datta | TNN

All of Mumbai's four major rivers originate in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Borivli. And, it's only within the park that the rivers are relatively clean. They begin to get polluted as soon as they exit its protected environs and enter the city.

The Mithi begins from the overflow of the Vihar and Powai lakes. Madhav Chitale, who prepared a report on the causes of the 2005 flood for the state government, says, "The Mithi River gets polluted as soon as it leaves the national park. Within the park, the only pollution is from

leaves that fall from trees. If these are not removed, they become muck. Yet the river is as clean as it can be in the park."

The smaller Oshiwara River empties into the Arabian Sea at Versova Creek. Its course runs through Andheri's industrial belt. The Dahisar River starts at Tulsi Lake and empties into Gori-Manori creek. "By the time she crosses the (Western Express) Highway, Dahisar becomes a sewer," says Janak Daftary of the Mithi Nadi Sansad. The Poisar River begins in the Borivli side of the park, runs most of its course through Kandivli and empties into the Versova Creek.

Uma Kadam

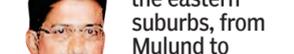
**We have to stop looking at lakes and rivers individually. Mumbai must be a seamless city. Make the Mithi River a public-use destination. This will help people bond with it**

— Gautam Kirtane | OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION



Mahul Creek is facing the same problem as the Mithi. Housing colonies have encroached on the creek. The water that used to flow into the creek has been disturbed. And all the sewage of the eastern suburbs, from Mulund to Ghatkopar, goes into the creek

— Anil Galgali | ACTIVIST



It's the citizens' active participation that encourages the system to work. For instance, we saw a builder covering the nullah five days ago. Within 10 minutes, there were 50 citizens questioning the builder. Seven to eight members of the BMC came to question the builder

— Ashoke Pandit | RESIDENT OF JUHU



If people feel the river is part of them, it will ensure sustenance. There has to be a sense of belonging. It has to begin in the child's mind. You have to allow children to interact with local rivers. Once that happens, the kid might turn to river protection when he or she grows up

— Janak Daftary | MITHI NADI SANSAD

## TOI Interactive 'GOVT NEEDS TO PUT UP PROPOSALS WITH TRANSPARENCY'

We asked readers how important the city's rivers are to Mumbai and the measures the BMC, state, citizens and conservation groups should take to protect and transform them. Here are some replies:

With reference to your article on April 1 regarding the Mithi River and the picture of Vakola nullah, what you have covered is a very small portion of the nullah. If you move towards the north where the airport is, you may see more filth and garbage, with open gutters continuously throwing dirty water into the nullah. Photos of this were taken a year ago and given to the BMC office in Santa Cruz (East). What is more shocking is that while an RCC wall is being constructed, the width of the nullah has been further reduced on the east side. This narrows the nullah and puts the surrounding area under a flood threat during the monsoon. There is more. A low-level bridge has been left half-constructed on the nullah, adding to the obstruction in the water's flow.

Dhaval Shah

**Today's question: Do you think it is possible to transform Mumbai's riverbanks into public spaces with walkways and gardens so that people can relax and unwind in greened zones?**

EMAIL: [speakout@timesgroup.com](mailto:speakout@timesgroup.com) with 'Riverbank' in the subject line

SMS: Type **SO** <space> **RIVERBANK Y OR N** <space> your views and name. SMS to **58888**

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If a few hundred meters on either side of the Mithi, Oshiwara, Dahisar, Poisar and Mahul rivers are cleared of encroachments and greened, we would have flood protection and an enviable water-park system. The state and BMC need to work together on this. They need to put up proposals with complete transparency. Most of all, they need to stick to deadlines. A key issue would be encroachments. The city and state should be magnanimous, yet firm in relocating them. Some funds could come from societies that would benefit. After all, your flat could go from being on the banks of a nullah to being like one on Carter Road. The press can help citizens and conservation groups by maintaining an online database of projects and printing highlights.

Sameer Shah | BANDRA (E)



**SEWAGE CANAL:** The Poisar River empties into the Arabian sea through Versova Creek

Mangroves safeguard Mumbai from erosion and floods. But they fall prey to land-grabbers. A look at efforts to save them

# Vigilant citizens battle to PROTECT THE PROTECTORS

Uma Kadam

Sukhada Tatke | TNN

Over the years, Mumbai's mangroves—the fragile buffer between land and sea—have been destroyed by builders, encroachers and even government agencies. Meanwhile, vigilant citizens and environmentalists have fought an unending battle to protect them, along with help from the courts.

The Open Mumbai exhibition, currently on at the NGMA, estimates there are about 61.7 sq km of mangroves hugging the coast, creeks and rivers on private and government land in the city. They provide protection from sea waves and give Mumbai a natural draining system for rainwater.

The government recently gave a much-needed fillip to the battle to save mangroves, forming mangrove committees in the suburbs to protect the natural asset (see box). However, Open Mumbai's organizers call for the inclusion of mangroves in the city's Development Plan, saying this would give a major boost to protection.

One can trace the genesis

## Mangrove Panels

The state's mangrove committees for the suburbs will include: Nominee of residents' groups | BMC town-planning official | Official of deputy collector rank | Senior inspector or assistant commissioner of police | MPCB official | Collector (committee head)

## Protected by Law

The police and forest department can act against mangrove destroyers under the Maharashtra Tree Felling Act and Environment Protection Act. The Bombay High Court halted mangrove destruction in 2005 and banned construction within 50 metres of them.

of the fight to save mangroves back to 1983. Then, these fragile green patches were treated as mere wastelands along the coast. The government had little idea about their importance as natural buffers between land and sea. Environmentalist Debi Goenka, executive trustee of Conservation Action Trust, took up the issue in the 1980s. "I realized that the state assumed that mangroves could be destroyed at will. Land was being systematically reclaimed for urbanization, industrialization, paddy cultivation and so on," says Goenka.

In 1986, environmentalists lobbied with the Maharashtra revenue department to include mangroves in the Schedule of Trees protected under the Ma-

harashtra Felling of Trees Regulation Act, 1964. "Mangroves were included in this schedule on January 28, 1987," says Goenka. For the first time in the state, destroying mangroves required the revenue department's go-ahead.

Then, environmentalists insisted that mangroves be included in the Coastal Regulation Zone-I (CRZ-1) notification. When the notification was finally issued in 1991, mangroves were in CRZ-1. Since then, various pockets of Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane have seen residents and activists waging battles to save the green lungs in their backyard.

In the mid-1990s, a strong grassroots movement in the Versova-Seven Bungalows area drew attention to the dangers posed to 100 acres of mangroves adjacent to Versova beach. "This has been one of the success stories, though the slums on the beach at Shanti Kutir remain and there is some amount of methi cultivation along the beach," says environmentalist Rishi Aggarwal, who was at the forefront of the struggle. Subsequently, in the early 2000s, the movement picked up in Lokhandwala and led to bigger victories.

But there were losses too. "Lokhandwala Complex has two distinctly large mangrove patches. One, measuring 500 acres behind Millat Nagar, is now already lost to builders," laments Aggarwal.

A strong movement also developed in Goregaon. It was led by Avisha Kulkarni and was later joined by, among others, like actor Irrfan Khan. But the

group here could not sustain the struggle. "Two religious structures have been built right on the creek. These were a bone of contention along with some constructions planned behind them. The big loss was a large plot opposite," says Aggarwal.

Destruction happens in two ways: Mangroves are either cut or they are subject to illegal dumping. Because of the subtle ways in which this can be accomplished, mangrove destruction is a perfect land-grab strategy. In most cases, kachcha roads are first laid deep within mangrove areas. These roads, made of debris, block inter-tidal waters and gradually choke the coastal ecosystem on which mangroves depend. Once the land becomes barren, slumlords build shacks and rent them out. In years to come, larger structures could replace the shanties.

In Charkop, about 140 acres of mangroves adjoining Manori creek have been allegedly under threat for years. Dumping took place to facilitate the construction of illegal residential and commercial structures. In some cases, mangroves were allegedly also being set ablaze. "Although the BMC and the collectorate have been demolishing the illegal constructions regularly, they keep coming up," says activist Reji Abraham.

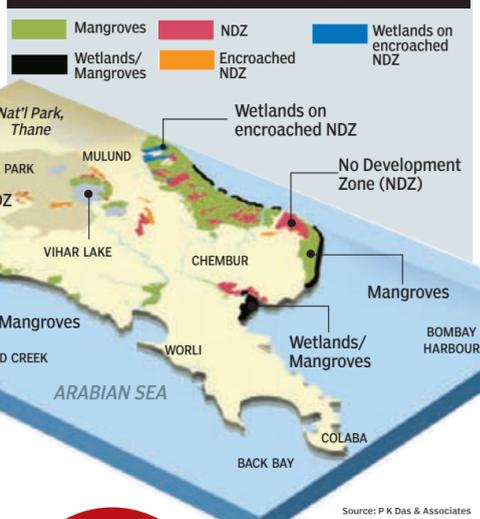
In Dahisar, members of the New Link Residents' Forum, have been fighting for two years to save a verdant stretch from being taken over by a builder. Taking note of their struggle, the Bombay High Court last year ordered that Kandivli-based Ravi Developers be fined Rs 1.24 crore for destruction of mangroves.

Mangroves are also lost to development and government agencies, alleges Goenka. "Whether it is for a metro carshed at Vikhroli, a dumping ground at Kanjurmarg or the Navi Mumbai airport, agencies that should have been protecting mangroves are destroying them systematically," says Goenka.

Often, there is a problem over which department's door to knock on. However, Valsa Nair-Singh, state principal secretary for environment, says a lot is being done to protect mangroves. "To streamline the process, we are forming mangrove committees comprising citizens and officials at local levels," says Nair-Singh. Architect and activist P K Das says, "Mangroves are a natural resource. They should be protected, irrespective of whether on government or private land."

► NEXT IN THE SERIES: Proposal for mangroves

## MAPPING THE MANGROVES



Source: P K Das & Associates

## MANGROVES

617.2 lakh sq m OR 61.72 sq km

## WETLANDS

80.1 lakh sq m OR 8.01 sq km

## BUFFERING THE COAST

CREEKS	AREA (SQ M)
Malad (Versova) Creek	30 L
Creek near Mankhurd	10.1 L
Creek near Mulund East	1.1 L
Creek at Sewri	0.7 L
Manori (Gorai) Creek	44.2 L
Creeks near Ghatkopar	3.7 L
Creeks near Vikhroli	2 L
Creeks near Mulund	0.7 L
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92.5 L sq m or 9.25 sq km</b>

The state is always hell-bent on gifting land to builders and it doesn't make an exception for mangroves. The high court gave a good order in 2005, saying that it was the collective responsibility of the police, forest department, BMC and collectorate to protect mangroves. This order is misused as each agency points fingers at the other

— D Stalin | NGO VANASHAKTI

While mangroves are important, we stretch the issue in Mumbai. Instead of exploiting the coast, we make problems with mangrove and CRZ laws. If it is a large stretch of mangroves, it must be preserved, but not every small patch. Instead, the land must be reclaimed and open spaces made. The CRZ law is stupid for Mumbai

— Hafeez Contractor | ARCHITECT

## State yet to notify chunk of coast's mangroves

Sukhada Tatke | TNN

In a landmark 2005 order, the Bombay High Court directed the state government to map via satellite all mangrove areas in Maharashtra and notify all government-owned mangroves as protected forests. Such lands were to be handed over to the forest department.

Seven years later, the state has managed to hand over just 5,800 hectares (58 sq km) of mangrove lands in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane to the forest department. By contrast, the Open Mumbai exhibition currently on in Mumbai estimates that just Mumbai has 61.7 sq km of mangroves, though this includes those on private land too. Sources said mangroves that the government hasn't notified, are stuck in litigation.

Meanwhile, Debi Goenka, executive trustee of Conservation Action Trust, says, "Of the total 32,000 hectares of mangroves in the state, the government has to still notify about 26,000 hectares that dot Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg. It should have identified those by now. But it has been dragging its feet." The government, says Goenka, has identified mangroves in areas of high commercial value.



SLOW DEATH: Debris dumped along mangroves in Malad can be seen gradually choking the life out of them

The Bombay high court order had also said that privately owned mangroves must be protected too. The high court had stipulated that no non-forestry activities can be carried out on such lands. "In case of private lands, encroachment is easy. Occupying forest land is difficult. Also, satellite imaging of mangrove forests, which is essential to identifying the geographical area of the ecosystem, has not been done properly," says Goenka, who played a pivotal role in getting mangroves status as protected forest cover.

The identification exercise began two years ago. "We identified 5,800 hectares of mangrove lands in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane. They were notified as protected forests and handed over to the forest department, except for those under litigation," says Valsa Nair-Singh, principal secretary for environment. "Now, we are in the process of notifying mangroves along the rest of the coast," says a senior state environment official. "Districts other than Mumbai and Thane will be mapped in the second stage. The deadline was October 2011, but we have sought an extension."

NATURE SQUEEZED: Slums encroach into the mangroves that run alongside the river in Malad-Kandivli that empties into Malad Creek. This absorption zone for rainwater is under threat

## Locals go green: Some battles won, others lost



### Lokhandwala eco-warriors

Recently, residents of Lokhandwala and Oshiwara saved a verdant patch of mangroves. They turned eco-warriors by forming the Oshiwara-Lokhandwala Citizens' Association to fight against "illegal" construction. The residents said around 10,000 sq m of mangroves adjacent to the creek had been destroyed by continuous dumping of debris. They alleged this was being done to help a builder construct a 21-storey tower on 7,741 sq m of land between Lokhandwala bridge and Lokhandwala Club. Taking note of their battle, Valsa Nair-Singh, state principal secretary for environment, instructed the collector, representatives of the forest department and BMC officials to take action against mangrove destruction. "After the order, the builder started clearing the area of equipment. The debris will also be removed and the mangroves regrown," said resident Ashoke Pundit.

WON

### Developer made to pay in Dahisar

Dahisar residents emerged victorious in January 2011 after a two-year battle, when the Supreme Court ruled against a developer. The residents, with help from Bombay Environment Action Group, saved 400 acres of mangroves. Fifty acres had already been destroyed. The developer, Jayesh Shah, had dumped debris and built bunds that blocked seawater from reaching the mangroves. The New Link Road Residents' Forum filed around 30 complaints under the Environment Protection Act. In the past year, five reports filed by state agencies confirmed green violations. The Supreme Court ordered the developer to open the bunds, remove the debris and pay a penalty. "We went through many problems to win the fight. We risked our lives by going into the areas to take photos," said Harish Pandey, of the forum. "The police didn't support us. They took two weeks to file an FIR."

### Facing a trashing in Kanjurmarg

Residents fought against the creation of a sanitary landfill in Kanjurmarg as it was proposed on 141 hectares of wetlands, of which about 70 hectares were mangroves. After a court battle and citizens' protests, the civic body agreed to separate the mangroves from the dumping area. Environmentalist Debi Goenka said the civic body told the court that the area was not CRZ-1 land and, so, work could go ahead. "Though work has started in the area without mangroves, it will affect the stretch that does as the channel through which seawater flows into the wetlands has been reclaimed. So the mangroves are dying anyway," he said. The BMC says only 20.76 hectares have thick mangroves and 86.72 hectares are free of them. "But satellite maps show 65.96 hectares have mangroves and the entire area is a wetland," said Goenka. "The area falls in a CRZ, intertidal zone."

LOST

### Chemi-kill in Goregaon

Residents of Bangur Nagar, Goregaon, noticed that a vast stretch of mangroves was being destroyed about ten years ago. "The mangrove stretch, not less than 50 acres, was sprinkled with chemicals," alleged one of the residents who was part of the struggle. "The mangroves died subsequently. We wrote letters, met officers from the municipal corporation, the police, the state environment ministry and others. But we got no response," said the resident, who refused to be named. The inevitable followed. "After destroying the mangroves, the stretch was filled up with debris. Later, illegal structures came up. Now there are residential and commercial buildings, and also a couple of religious structures. Despite doing all we could, we couldn't save the mangroves in the area."

— Sukhada Tatke | TNN

## TOI Interactive 'DEVELOPING RIVERBANKS WILL LEAD TO A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP TOWARDS RIVERS'

We asked readers if they think it is possible to transform Mumbai's riverbanks into public spaces with walkways, boardwalks and gardens so that people can relax and unwind in such greened zones. Here is one of the replies:

For any city to develop in a sustainable manner and preserve its nature, collective citizen engagement and intervention are imperative. Developing riverbanks as gardens and recreational spaces will lead to an increased sense of ownership and responsibility towards river bodies. This will also result in increased public scrutiny of open spaces. It is high time we, as citizens, realize that community participation in preserving our eco-system is a must. At United Way Mumbai Helpline, our efforts are to engage civic participation for such initiatives. — Anil Parmar

Earlier, we asked readers how important the city's rivers are to Mumbai and the measures the BMC, state, citizens and conservation groups should take to protect and transform them. Here is one more reply:

The MMRDA is carrying out a modification to augment the drainage capacity of the Mithi River. Hi-tech explosives are detonated when the water level is high enough to blast rocks to increase the river's depth. Considering that the standard explanation doled out by various authorities for flooding is, 'When heavy rain coincides with high tide, there is flooding,' what

Today's question: Do you think the state's plan to have local-level mangrove committees will help save these fragile buffers between Mumbai and the sea, especially since each committee will have a residents' representative?

EMAIL speakout@timesgroup.com with 'Mangrove' in the subject line

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purpose does it serve to increase the river's depth? This shows that the fundamentals are weak. Lady Jeejeebhoy was more knowledgeable, as she built a causeway at Mahim (from her own purse) because water would overflow the causeway, causing hardly any hindrance to free flow. The need of the hour is to increase the width at the discharge point of the Mithi and raise the road level in the bridge-span area. Axial pumps would help increase the velocity of the discharge. A friend of mine says that if he is reborn in Mumbai 100 years later, he would still see flyovers being built and the Mithi being cleaned. So, MMRDA, please wake up and learn some fundamentals. — P R V Raghavan



Developing leisure zones along mangroves & creeks may protect these ecosystems from abuse and increase open spaces

# MANGROVE MAKEOVERS COULD SAVE GREENERY

Sukhada Tatke | TNN

Mumbai is an urban jungle blessed with close to 71 sq km of creeks and mangroves along its coastline, but the beneficiaries of this bounty — mainly us — have done woefully little to protect as well as beautify these fragile, yet important ecosystems. On the contrary, these green zones, which are natural barriers against tides, storms and erosion, have suffered a long history of abuse and encroachment.

Protecting areas around the fast-diminishing and increasingly polluted creeks and mangroves could therefore go a long way towards preserving them. It would also unlock their natural beauty and, in the process, enhance the environs and space for leisure.

The Open Mumbai exhibition, currently on at the NGMA, has proposed that the abuse and neglect can be arrested by developing public spaces around creeks and mangroves. The proposal envisages 0.2 sq km of boardwalks lining portions of the approximately 61.7 sq km of mangroves in the city. Beautification has also been proposed along creeks, with 0.14 sq km of walkways, gardens and so on envisaged at three locations, Malad and near Mankhurd and Mulund (East).

"This plan envisages a much-needed barrier or buffer zone between these wetlands and the city," says architect P K Das, one of the organizers of the Open Mumbai exhibition. "Not only would these areas be visited by people, but the creeks and mangroves would also be open to public vigilance. Importantly, it would help expand and network our open spaces in this city. It might also help reduce environmental damage."

The idea of creating public open spaces around creeks and mangroves is not new. It has been implemented the world over and even closer to

home. Take, for instance, Chennai and its plan to rejuvenate one of its oldest ecosystems — Adyar Creek. The eco-restoration plan has even identified pollution-control measures, such as treating and diverting municipal and industrial wastewater. It also recommends sanitation facilities and organized solid waste management systems.

Open Mumbai's proposal for Mumbai includes near-

## Exhibit extended

The Open Mumbai exhibition, which explores ways to expand and link public areas in the city, will continue at the NGMA in Kala Ghoda till May 15. It was originally expected to end today, April 7. TNN

shore protection measures, development of prominent open spaces into interactive areas for people and development of selected measures for controlled access to estuaries. "Increased interaction between people would help safeguard the banks of estuaries and develop public awareness towards eco-restoration efforts and the ecosystems of estuaries and creeks," said Das.

The plan hopes to capitalize on the reality that Mumbai is amongst the few cities in the world where vast stretches of creeks and mangroves intermingle with the city's land mass. "Both creeks and mangroves are part of a unified ecological system that must be protected, nur-

tured and integrated," said Das.

Open Mumbai has proposed that the city's new Development Plan should have provisions for creeks and mangroves. These include defining their boundaries and reserving 30 metres along the sides of these wetlands as compulsory public spaces. Construction would be limited to public conveniences, like toilets, water fountains and security booths. Landscape development would comprise paving, walkways, boardwalks and so on.

Sharad Chaphekar, honorary director for environmental conservation at the Indian Institute of Environmental Medicine, said, "The basic problem for Mumbai's coastal areas is that they are not protected because of dumping and reclamation. If that is stopped and the mangrove habitat is protected, the mangroves would be safe and grow properly."

He added that while any effort to conserve mangroves is laudable, he could not comment on any proposal without knowing about it.

Praveen Pardeshi, forest secretary, said, "We have started notifying mangroves on government land. Once

they are demarcated, we will put up boards about the value of mangroves. We have also formed a special protection cell for mangroves under the chairmanship of the chief conservator of forests. This will ensure stronger vigilance and protection of mangroves."



## CREEKS

	Area (sq m)	Proposed devpt (sq m)	Total (sq m)
Malad (Versova) Creek	30 L	0.7 L	30.7
Creek near Mankhurd	10.1 L	0.2 L	10.3 L
Creek near Mulund East	1.1 L	0.5 L	1.6 L
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.2 L</b>	<b>1.4 L</b>	<b>42.6 L</b>

Other creeks: (Sewri, Manori and near Ghatkopar, Vikhroli & Mulund): **5.13 sq km**  
Overall creeks: **9.25 sq km**



SNAKING THROUGH: Picturesque mangrove stretches could have boardwalks for viewing, which would also halt the swamps' destruction



The basic problem for Mumbai's

coastal areas is that they are not protected because of dumping and reclamation. If that is stopped and the mangrove habitat is protected, the mangroves would be safe and grow properly

— Sharad Chaphekar | HONORARY DIRECTOR FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE

Beyond doubt, creating open spaces along mangroves is a good idea. It's been debated for more than a decade. It's shameful that the officials have not carried out a pilot project yet. The edges can be beautified, bird parks created and so on

— Rishi Aggarwal  
MANGROVE SOCIETY OF INDIA



## TOI Interactive

### MANGROVE PANELS CAN WORK LIKE ALMS

We asked readers whether the state's plan to have local-level mangrove committees will help save these swamps, especially since each committee will have a residents' representative? Here is one of the replies:

The state's plan to have local-level mangrove committees to save these fragile zones is perhaps the best step yet in the right direction. The committees could work in the same manner as Area Locality Management (ALM) groups. The ALM concept was introduced into the BMC more than a decade ago. The participation of local

ALMs has proved to be a notable success at several places in Mumbai. Since environment and safety are universal concerns, the state, as the parent authority, and the local-level committee, as the unit for surveillance, can certainly work out an effective mechanism to protect mangroves.

— Ramesh N Hasgekar

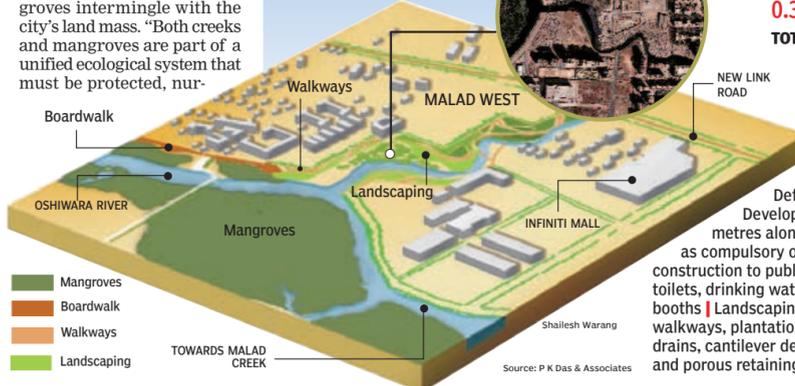
**Today's Question: Do you think Mumbai will ever see the edges of its creeks & mangroves beautified with boardwalks and gardens?**

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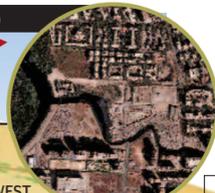
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## Malad Creek Revamp

Current satellite pic of area Open Mumbai proposes could be conserved/beautified



- Mangroves
- Boardwalk
- Walkways
- Landscaping



Define boundaries in the Development Plan | Reserve 30 metres along creeks and mangroves as compulsory open spaces | Limit construction to public conveniences, like toilets, drinking water fountains and security booths | Landscaping allowed would be paving, walkways, plantation, seats, lighting, signs, drains, cantilever decks, boardwalks, railings and porous retaining walls

Overall mangroves & creeks: **70.95 sq km**  
Overall development along mangroves & creeks: **0.34 sq km**  
**TOTAL: 71.29 sq km**

## RESERVE & BEAUTIFY

Proposals by Open Mumbai for creeks and mangroves:

Define boundaries in the Development Plan | Reserve 30 metres along creeks and mangroves as compulsory open spaces | Limit construction to public conveniences, like toilets, drinking water fountains and security booths | Landscaping allowed would be paving, walkways, plantation, seats, lighting, signs, drains, cantilever decks, boardwalks, railings and porous retaining walls

## Specialized Clinics, Integrated Approach Are Need Of The Hour, Say Doctors

# Finding medical care a challenge for

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

For some, getting old could mean visiting multiple doctors and popping multiple pills. On Friday, the eve of World Health Day, experts said that seeking chronic care could be a tedious process for senior citizens even in a city like Mumbai that has an elaborate health-care system.

## WORLD HEALTH DAY

Some elderly people live here while

their children are abroad. They downplay their symptoms or avoid expensive treatment. By the time they reach the doctors, it is too late for an easy solution

— Dr Sudhir Vaishav | CARDIOLOGIST

"Senior citizens have to go to various doctors, depending on their symptoms. They have one doctor for their heart problems, another for their knee problem and so on. There is no integrated approach," said a doctor attached to a south Mumbai hospital.

In fact, the World Health Organization, which has focused on aging as this

# CITY'S ELDERLY

year's World Health Day theme, has asked its member countries to develop sustainable systems of chronic care for the elderly. "These must address the chronic nature of problems and the coexistence of multiple diseases, requiring multiple treatments. For example, many elderly patients in high-income countries can be taking up to 20 medications at a time, often resulting in adverse health effects due to drug interactions," it has said.

Furthermore, there is the fear that not all elderly people get access to the right treatment. WHO has, for example, said that only 4-14% of elderly people in low- and middle-income countries receive effective antihypertensive treatment. "Until recently, it was

## A COUNTRY FOR OLD PEOPLE

Each figure represents percentage of senior citizens unless stated otherwise. The projections are of the Union ministry of health and family welfare

- 12** Percentage of senior citizens in the country in 2025
- 10** To be bedridden, requiring utmost care
- 80** To be in rural areas, making service delivery a challenge
- 30** To be below the poverty line
- 51** Percentage of women among the elderly in 2016

## Population of people above the age of 60

**100 million** | In 2013  
**198 million** | In 2030

believed that it is natural for the elderly to have high blood pressure," said Dr Gaurang Desai, who runs one of the few clinics for the elderly in the city, at Hiranandani Hospital, Powai. "While city doctors now know better, it is anybody's guess if the aged living in rural areas get anti-hypertensive medicines."

A problem is that only a few big hospitals, such as the civic-run KEM Hospital, Parel, have clinics dedicated for the elderly. This, say doctors, is because the specialty of geriatrics is not popular in India. "Traditionally, people in India died because of infectious diseases. Unlike in the US, a few lived to be 80. Hence, geriatrics as a specialty has not developed in India," said cardiologist Dr Sudhir Vaishav.

Experts believe that there is an emotional angle to poor chronic disease management for the elderly. "Some elderly people live here while their children are abroad. They downplay their symptoms or avoid expensive treatment. By the time they reach the doctors, it is too late for an easy solution," said Dr Vaishav.

A senior doctor at a civic hospital said that clinics for the elderly should be held more regularly at government as well as private hospitals. "The elderly require specialized care. A doctor cannot allocate only five minutes to listen to an 80-year-old's health woes," said Dr Desai. "Doctors need to give them space and time to listen to their story before questioning them about their health."

## 'Families must respect dignity of the aged'

Pratibha Masand | TNN

Mumbai: Four years ago, Margaret Pereira (74; name changed) was diagnosed with dementia. After the death of her husband, she was on her own. For a long time, she did not step out of her home or receive visitors. When her daughters visited her after a few months, they found that she had developed breathlessness owing to the lack of physical activity.

A visit to the doctor showed that Pereira's asthma attacks had increased in frequency, a swelling in her foot had grown in proportion over a period of time, and she had developed medical conditions that were not there. "When we took her to the doctor, we found that her thyroid levels had shot up and she was suffering from pulmonary embolism. A blood clot had entered her lung, making it very difficult for her to breathe," said her daughter Rachel.

Pereira was put on medication for depression. She was admitted in hospital for a week. When she returned home, she was disoriented and her limbs had become stiff. A visit to a neurosurgeon revealed that she was suffering from dementia and medication for depression had made her case worse.

But now, Pereira has made many changes in her lifestyle, said Dr Girish Nair of Fortis Hospital, Mulund. "Society should respect the individuality of the patient and treat him or her with full dignity, like any normal human being."

## 68-yr-old marathoner leads by example

Pratibha Masand | TNN

Mumbai: The last Mumbai Marathon had an eager participant—Surendra Dasadia (68), who should be a motivation for all those who think

they should reduce physical activities in their sunset years.

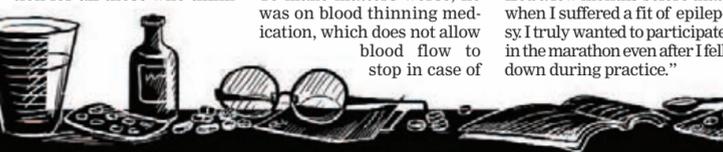
Dasadia started practicing for the marathon from June 2011. But during his last practice session, he fell on his face. To make matters worse, he was on blood thinning medication, which does not allow blood flow to stop in case of

cuts. Moreover, he had asthma and a history of epilepsies.

"I had an open heart surgery two years ago and had never run after my school days," he said. "I had to be hospitalized a few months before that, when I suffered a fit of epilepsy. I truly wanted to participate in the marathon even after I fell down during practice."



Mahesh Benkar



Sanjay Hadkar

**WALKING WITH CHRIST**  
Vast crowds endured the heat to go on a walking pilgrimage along the lanes of Vakola, Kalina and Santa Cruz with a man dressed as Christ carrying a cross.

Organized by the Catholic Secular Forum (CSF), this is an annual pilgrimage on Good Friday which enacts the last walk of Christ before he was crucified.

The walk starts from Santa Cruz and winds along the lanes till it gets to Kalina, with pilgrims walking along and praying.

Organizer Joe Dias said, "The street stops of the pilgrimage are designed to let everyone know about the suffering of Christ on the cross." TNN

# Good Friday lays stress on suffering

Ashley D'Mello | TNN

Mumbai: Good Friday was observed in the city with solemnity, marking the day Jesus Christ was crucified. Special prayers went up for world peace and communal amity.

There were services and ceremonies in Catholic, Protestant and Syrian Christian churches. The theme which recurred in sermons was suffering and repentance. The ceremonies brought to the fore 40 days of penance Christians observe

## 'WE BELIEVE HE'S AMONG US'

before Good Friday.

The parish priest of St Stephen's Church at Cumballa Hill, Fr Ernest Fernandes, said the sermons revolved around the fact that Christ died and now lives among us. "This is our faith, we believe he is among us," he said. The Rev Victor Gollapalli of the Church of North India (CNI), the largest Protestant group in the country, reminded his flock of the trials and tribulations of Christ on the cross and his suffering for mankind.

"All our sermons concentrated on the suffering of Christ and its relevance to the world," he said.

In Vasai, Fr Joe Pereira who preaches to inmates of Kripa, an ashram that houses people suffering from substance abuse, called upon people to give up a life of material addiction. "It is in giving that we receive and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life," he said.

The spokesperson for the Catholic Archbishop's house, Fr Anthony Charanghat, said Good Friday revolved not just around the ideas of suffering and repentance. "It also espouses the idea of forgiveness. Christ forgave his killers. This love for mankind is central to Christianity," he said.

Fr Charanghat added that it was important to "walk with Christ" on Good Friday. "People are asked to relieve the agony which he underwent before he died on the cross. Understanding this is important for all Christians," he added.

Good Friday services have a solemn tone with music and singing. Friday afternoon saw many churches reliving the suffering of Christ on the cross, called Stations of the Cross. People are taken along a route where Christ went with 14 stops or stations where they relive his suffering.

## Youth's body found

The severed body of Mahendra Gangavne (24) was found on Byculla's railway tracks. The Government Railway Police said the deceased had been knocked down by a train. TNN

## 'Move dump yard'

A youth congress delegation met CM Chavan regarding the apathy of the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation toward moving a dumping yard in Kalyan (W) to its designated area in Umbrade village. TNN

## 25-year-old killed

Shankar Tambe (25), a Kasara resident, was found murdered in a Thane forest. Cops are hunting for two of Tambe's friends in the murder case. TNN

## 'Charge toll office'

The All-India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) has demanded a nationwide, one-time toll tax to save on diesel expenses and time at toll plazas. TNN

## Jewel thieves held

The Mira Road police have arrested two thieves from Rajasthan, Madanlal Choudhary (19) and Modsingh Rajpurohit (30), for looting jewellery showrooms in the area. TNN

# 'Mumbai needs five-year plans'

Prashant Nakwe



**THINK TANK:** The exhibition on open spaces will continue till May 15

Linah Baliga | TNN

**Mumbai:** The city will not benefit from having a 20-year Development Plan (DP), but instead needs smaller five-year plans, said Gautam Chatterjee, principal secretary, housing, Maharashtra, at the concluding seminar of the Open Mumbai exhibition at the NGMA on Saturday. The exhibition, which is supported by the Times of India and focuses on expanding and linking open spaces across the city, will continue till May 15.

"One of the most crucial mistakes that we made while formulating our current DP in 1991 was that we did not capture the ground reality," said Chatterjee. "After 20 years, there has been only 5% implementation of the DP. Instead of a 20-year DP, we need to have a DP broken into four five-year-plans and then make provisions for this in the budget. If we realize this, we will not make the same mistakes we made in 1991."

Open Mumbai, organized by the Mumbai Waterfronts Centre and architect P K Das, makes several proposals for the new DP, like defining the boundaries of beaches, mangroves, rivers, nullahs and so on, and restricting construction on open spaces, including playgrounds.

The topic for Saturday's discussion was 'How to make the 2014 DP dynamic.' Present among the other panelists were D M Sukhtankar, former municipal commissioner, Gerson Da Cunha, trustee for

Action for Good Governance and Networking in India, and Shaina N C, BJP spokesperson. The DP defines land-use patterns and sets Floor Space Index norms. It makes provisions for schools, colleges, hospitals and open spaces for a given populace. Mumbai, which has a poor record of following DPs, will have a new plan ready in 2014.

Chatterjee said it is important for the civic body to take into account in the DP the city's non-buildable open spaces and natural assets, like mangroves, wetlands, creeks, nullahs and rivers.

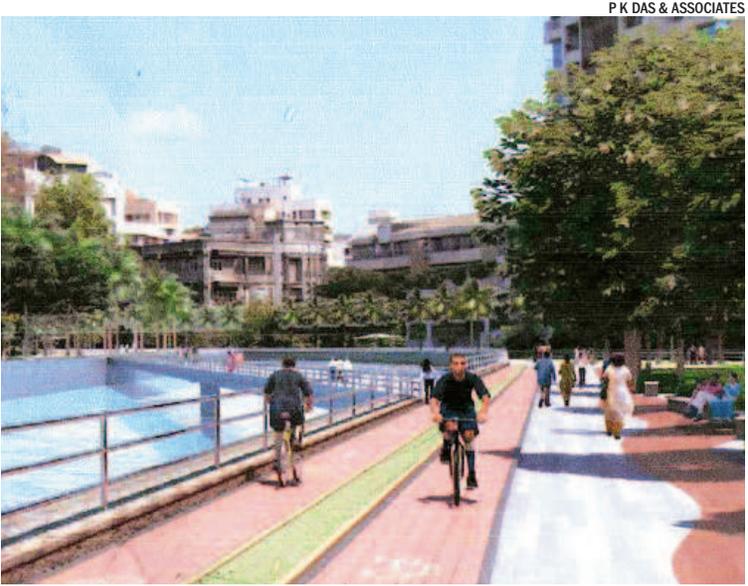
Sukhtankar acknowledged that during his tenure

## DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

as municipal commissioner in the 1960s, the BMC was ill-equipped to take on such a huge exercise of preparing the DP. "The whole DP starts with a survey of existing land use, which is a 20-year projection," said Sukhtankar. "The old DP doesn't talk about engaging people in meaningful employment, the civic amenities needed for the projected population and how funds can be raised. The old DP didn't talk about how to make the plan a reality and there were no investment or action plan suggested. Such deficiencies should be avoided in the 2014 DP." Das said the Development Control Regulations, which are the legal teeth for the DP, are often tinkered with.

# Filthy Irla nullah to be turned into green zone

The Rs 20-crore, four-year beautification project beginning this month, will provide jogging and cycle tracks on either side and a three-layer system to keep the water clean



A computer image depicting how the area will look after completion of the project

P K DAS & ASSOCIATES

Sudeshna.Chatterjee @timesgroup.com

Since the July 26, 2005 deluge, the Irla nullah in Juhu has been called many things, including 'a disaster waiting to happen'. Surrounded by hundreds of shanties, and often choked because of the rubbish thrown in by the slum dwellers, the nullah - one of city's major storm water drains - often floods the societies in JVPD Scheme during monsoon.

The nullah is now set for a makeover, with jogging and cycle tracks on either side, the entire area turned into a green zone; and clean water in the nullah courtesy a three-layered auto cleaning system. The beautification of the nullah will begin this month, based on the recommendations by the Chitale Committee, which the state government had set up post the 2005 deluge.



RANA CHAKRABORTY

The nullah as is today

Rajya Sabha MP Javed Akhtar has pledged to extend financial assistance to the 4-year project - costing about Rs 20 crore. "I support the idea to better the landscape along the drain. I've decided to dedicate my MP Local Area Development Fund for the project."

Speaking to *Mumbai Mirror*, architect P K Das from P K Das & Associates, which has designed the project, said,

"Of the total length of 7.5 km, in the first phase, a 2.5-km will be developed. This is not just about creating tracks. There will be contiguous network of open spaces, including amphitheatres, to enrich community spirit."

With wider roads on both sides, civic workers will also have better access to the nullah for its cleaning. While Mumbai has a total length of 381 kilometers of rivers and drains in the city, in many cases, there is little or no space along them - though it is a must for the civic body to build six-metre roads on either side.

BMC Additional Commissioner Aseem Gupta said, "We will look into the success of this project. If this clicks, we will beautify service roads along other major drains and rivers across the city. We have started building service roads along nullahs and rivers, and plan to cover 204 kms by 2014. We too have plans to do sewage treatment on these outlets."

## NOTED MARATHI SCRIPTWRITER SANJAY BELOSE DIES IN ROAD MISHAP

SANJAY BELOSE, NOTED MARATHI and Hindi script writer, actor, director died in a road accident in Mira Road on Sunday. The 45-year-old lost control of his bike on a bridge and fell off it.

"The mishap occurred before the Kashmiri police chowky. While cops rushed him to a private hospital, he was declared dead before admission. Belose is survived by his wife, daughter and a son," said an officer from Kashmiri police station.

Belose had won many Maharashtra State awards in drama and had acted in Vijaya Mehta's famous

Marathi plays: *Nagmandal* and *Pagla Ghoda*. He won the Natya Darpan awards for Marathi plays *Kharach Mazhayasaati* and *Lafda Solatala*. He had scripted, acted and directed *Ghar Aaiyacha*, *Indian*, *Most Wanted*, *Ladh Babu Ladh* (all in Marathi). Recently released Marathi film *Kai Karo Na Kasa Karo* was written by him.

Belose was a popular name in Bollywood too. He was a co-writer for *Phir Hera Pheri*, *Khatta Meetha*, *Malaamal Weekly* and other films. His funeral was held in the afternoon in Kashmiri in the presence of a host of Marathi and Hindi actors and directors.

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Sealed Tenders are invited by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation Ltd. (MSRDC), for toll collection the following locations of toll stations for the period of 156 weeks on Whole Upfront Payment basis.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Realization (ER) / Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)
1	2	3
1	Appointment of Contractor for collection of toll at toll station at Km. 336/800 Near Nakshatrawadi on Aurangabad - Paithan Road.	Rs. 1025 Lac / Rs. 51.25 Lac
2	Appointment of Contractor for collection of toll at toll station Near Lasur Village on Aurangabad - Lasur Road, SH No. 30.	Rs. 307 Lac / Rs. 15.35 Lac
3	Appointment of Contractor for collection of toll at toll station passing for Railway Over Bridge at Parbhani Km. 99/200 on S.H. No. 217	Rs. 356 Lac / Rs. 17.80 Lac
4	Collection of toll at toll station : Nagzari - Kherda - Karanja Road at Km. 176/540 in Amravati District	Rs. 1059 Lac / Rs. 52.95 Lac
5	Collection of toll at toll station Village : Shevati on Karanja - Malegaon Road of SH No.207 at Km. 18/500 in Washim District	Rs. 1217 Lac / Rs. 60.85 Lac
6	Appointment of Contractor for collection of toll on Sindhakhed - Jalna Road, Near Nandapur Pir Kalyan Chowk on SH. No. 177 at Km. 10/200 in Jalna District.	Rs. 1069 Lac / Rs. 53.45 Lac

1. Period of issue of blank Tender Form : From 02.04.2012 to 17.04.2012 (except Government holidays) time 11.00 hrs to 18.00 hrs.
2. EMD as per column No.3 shall be deposited electronically through RTGS (RTGS Code - CNRB000108) in the name of MSRDC/A/c No. 0108256705346 with Canara Bank, Branch Fort by 23.04.2012.
3. Last date of sealed tenders of submission shall be 25.04.2012 upto 13.00 hrs. during office hours.
4. For full details of offer please log on to MSRDC Website : www.msrdc.org. If required contact at Toll Monitoring Unit, M.S.R.D.C. (Ltd.), in the premises of Rajiv Gandhi Sea Link Project Office, Opp. Bandra Reclamation Bus Depot, Bandra (West), Mumbai - 400 050. Telefax Nos. 26412382 / 26414605.

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PK Das, chairperson, Mumbai Waterfronts Centre, at his Prabhadevi office with a vision plan for Juhu that will be part of the exhibition. PIC/ SANTOSH NAGWEKAR

# 'A CITY IS A COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVOUR'

*Open Mumbai: Let's Expand Public Spaces, is a series of vision plans for a cleaner, greener, better planned Mumbai, mounted by architecture firm P. K. Das & Associates and the Mumbai Waterfronts Centre, currently on display at a city gallery. Das, Chairperson of the MWC, tells us what it will mean to you if the plans are ever sanctioned to be translated into reality.*

**SANJIV NAIR**  
smdmail@mid-day.com

**What inspired the vision plan for Open Mumbai: Let's expand public spaces? How long have you been toying with the idea?**

The inspiration comes from the condition of Mumbai. The quality of life is deteriorating, and as the city expands, public space is shrinking. Therefore it is important to have a positive change. We have been working on it for 15 years. Whether it is Bandra Bandstand, Carter Road or any of the numerous other projects which we have been working on, it has been a transformation in the making. During the last one year, these individual efforts have come together. Lessons learnt from various citizen's movements we have been a part of have culminated into this exhibition.

**How can the project be executed?**

The project has 2 principle parts — Part 1 is about the areas in which the changes have already been

implemented — Juhu Beach, Carter Road, Bandra Bandstand and Gateway of India — and our learnings from these projects. Nearly 50 per cent of the envisioned plan therefore has already been completed. Part 2 of the projects is built on the strength of these learnings. The second phase proposes similar simple ideas that can be executed in other areas. These incorporate projects which are grounded in reality.

**What is the fundamental guiding principle for the project?**

The basis of the project is conservation, renovation, recycling and replanning. It is important to understand that we are speaking of integrating the project within the existing realities of the city. It is not a mega project, but a combination of small and doable projects. The attempt is to double our open public spaces. We are attempting to create nearly 500 kilometres of green open spaces, which will be utilised as walking and cycling tracks. These spaces will be dotted with gardens and water parks. These spaces will not operate in a silo; they will all be connected to each other, creating a vast network of green open space that extends from Andheri to Chembur; from Mahim to Colaba. It will connect all parts of the city and will facilitate social networking in the real world. The rationale is to have people enjoy and truly identify with the city. It is important to democratise Mumbai's open spaces.

**Will large-scale changes need to be made to the layout of the city itself? Will it extend to changes in residential areas as well?**

The plan we have put together does not displace. It does not call for major replacement of populations. It just requires small reconfigurations in the plans of certain city pockets. At the exhibition you can see a model of a similar reconfiguration in the Juhu area plan we have proposed. We do not look at projects from a top-down perspective. We look at cities from the bottom-up, where each area plan reflects the identity and need of its residents. Over the years each neighbourhood in Mumbai has developed its own identity. Our aim is to preserve this individuality. Therefore the plan necessitates the need for personalisation of neighborhoods.

**How has the Government responded to your vision?**

They have been extremely supportive. Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan was extremely moved, especially since this was the first time he saw Mumbai the way we see it. Some important bureaucrats were present during the inauguration and he had an immediate discussion with them on how they can take it forward. Uddhav Thackeray has already brought together corporators to take this up with proper plans chalked out, replete with deadlines. So the ball has already started rolling. I am hoping that the support continues.

**How long would a project of this magnitude take to get executed? How much will it cost?**

The complete budget is Rs 2,500 crore, which for a project of this magnitude is actually quite less. The maximum period for its execution is

about 10 years.

*A lot of work which you have done exemplifies a successful marriage of social development and architecture. If this project were sanctioned would it be your greatest challenge and achievement?*

(Laughs) I am sure that if we achieve this it would be a great achievement for everybody in Mumbai. But it is important to understand that a city is a collaborative endeavour. No one person can consider anything in it his own personal accomplishment. Amartya Sen once said that 'it is public action that influences governments'. And this is an ideology we have worked with for all these years. Bandra Bandstand's redevelopment was a public initiative. It was started without the government's support. Over the last couple of counts, the city's population has dropped from 12.5 crore to 11.8. I hope it is a flash in the pan as I don't want population to drop in Mumbai. I wish for it to stabilise. I would never want to have people leave the city thinking they would be better off elsewhere.

**AT:** NGMA, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Near Regal Cinema, Fort

**TILL:** Saturday, April 7, Tuesday to Sunday, from 11am to 6pm

**TICKETS:** Indians — Rs10; Foreign Nationals — Rs150;

Students/Children — Rs1

**CALL:** 22881969

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# 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

**RINKITA GURAV**  
rinkita.gurav@mid-day.com

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.

**MY CITY!**

## 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