

metro

quotemartial

We did not apply for additional floor square index under any slum rehabilitation scheme. On the contrary, we have a budget to rehabilitate these slum dwellers.

CHHAGAN BHUJAL, deputy chief minister



How the grand old lady gets a makeover

RESTORING CST BUILDING
Crucial stage involves cleaning and renovating the dome

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MUMBAI: Behind a green curtain, Mumbai's iconic and one of the world's most photographed buildings is getting a spring-cleaning.

Along with the sun and a relentless monsoon, the façade of the majestic 123-year-old Mumbai CST building has withstood the onslaught of Mumbai's polluted and salted air, dust and human interventions from time to time.

The architectural conservation plan to restore the Gothic building to its original nineteenth century glory is in a crucial stage.

For the first time, the building's huge dome and the stained glass is being restored.

Construction of the building started in 1877 and was completed by 1888.

The dome towering the structure is believed to be the first masonry dome adapted for a Gothic building in Mumbai at that time. Made of lime and sandstone blocks, the dome is a marvel of construction.

More than 50 workers are working on the building's roof systematically scrubbing, washing and restoring the UNESCO-listed World Heritage building stone by stone.

Once the cleaning and restoration is done, the conservation team will apply a coat of chemicals that will protect it from natural elements and weather for years to come.

Cleaning and conservation of the building, fixing plumbing and leakage problems, replacing damaged artifacts and restoring the Mangalorean-tiled roof with similar one are some of the key tasks.

The Rs 14.5 crore restoration project is being implemented in three phases.

"Each façade is being taken up systematically. We have selected the best for conservation of CST. The methods being used are benchmarked globally. It will get the building back to its full glory. We are careful in selecting the material so as to match and replace parts of

UNKNOWN FACTS

THE ORIGINAL COST
Rs 16,13,863

went into building Victoria Terminus, now called Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus.

MISSING STATUE

The statue of Queen Victoria has gone missing from the station façade.

ARTIFACTS

Many figures on the building were carved by Lockwood Kipling and his students from the Sir JJ School of Art, which is located opposite the station.

STAR CHAMBER

The "star chamber" above the booking office is a blue, domed ceiling embedded with an array of stars crafted in 18-karat gold.

the original damaged artifacts and gargoyles in the building. Exact dimensions are taken and replicas are then carefully carved out," P.K. Saxena, CR's principal chief engineer said.

Saxena's cabin on the second floor has colonial furniture made of Burma teak and age-old dial clocks.

"The dome and the stained glass is being restored for the first time in more than 30 years. In the early 70s, the statue of progress standing on the building's dome had been struck by lightning and the railways restored it with the help of students from the JJ School of Arts," he added.



HEMANT PADALKAR / HT PHOTO



HT PHOTOS



A worker cleans stained glass windows (left) inside the CST building. The restoration project, costing Rs 14.5 crore, will be done in three stages. The project includes fixing leakages, replacing damaged artifacts and restoring the Mangalorean-tiled roof.

CONSERVING HERITAGE

- Stone cleaning was first carried out in 1999-2000
- As per the recommendation in the conservation report, the railway board sanctioned the restoration of the heritage building at a cost of Rs 14.5 crore
- Contracts were awarded after taking approvals from the BMC's Mumbai Heritage Committee in 2001
- The detailed restoration of the outer façade began last year. Restoration of the dome has been taken up now.

MAIN PROBLEMS AND UNIQUE SOLUTIONS

THE DOME

Problem: The dome has turned black due to algae growth and has developed cracks, causing water seepage.

SOLUTION: The dome is being cleaned. A 40-m scaffolding has been erected and it is being cleaned thoroughly. A protective coat will be applied to save it from harsh weather and pollution.

THE STAINED GLASS

Problem: The stained glass that had seals of the original railway company and logos has developed cracks at some places. The original glass was made in England and shipped to the city.

SOLUTION: The stained glass will be protected with more layers of thick glass. The damaged ones will be made again.

THE GARGOYLES

Problem: The gargoyles protruding out of the building at various places are actually water outlets. They have also broken at several places.

SOLUTION: The gargoyles have been remade using the same composition, carved out by local artists and attached to the building with steel pins.

THE MANGALOREAN ROOF

Problem: The Mangalorean roof had developed cracks at edges, leading to leaks. The tiles had broken at many places.

SOLUTION: The tiles have been re-made in the same materials and dimensions and put over tin sheets to give them additional support.

Police stations to tackle illegal constructions

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MUMBAI: In two months, the island city and the suburbs will get special police stations to deal with unauthorised constructions.

A government pleader on Thursday told the Bombay High Court that the proposal for special police stations has been forwarded to the Home department for approval.

Urban areas of Thane district will also get such special police stations, said pleader Sudeep Nargolkar. He, however, did not specify the number of police stations expected to come up.

Nargolkar was replying to a petition filed by Vasai-based non-governmental organisation Harit Vasai seeking action against illegal constructions in Vasai and Virar.

The HC has widened the scope of the petition and extended it to whole of Thane district.

Nargolkar told a division bench of Chief Justice Anil Dave and Justice S.C. Dharmadhikari that a decision to remove all post-2000 unauthorised constructions in the city and urban areas of Thane district was taken at a high-level meeting at Mantralaya on Monday.

It was also decided to initiate criminal action against civic officials of Thane district if they

A VASAI-BASED NGO, HARIT VASAI, HAS SOUGHT ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN VASAI AND VIRAR

fail to act against illegal construction.

The judges, however, were skeptical about the implementation of the decision. "Why do you need to hold meetings and discussions for demolishing illegal constructions?" asked Justice Dharmadhikari.

Uday Warunjikar, counsel for the petitioner, said the court had, about two years ago, asked the revenue authorities to survey all unauthorised constructions in Thane district, but the survey is yet to be completed.

He added that there were 2.4 lakh unauthorised constructions in Mira-Bhayander.

Ram Apte, the lawyer for civic bodies, told the court that the drive to demolish illegal buildings was on.

The court decided to ascertain the claim and directed all civic bodies from Thane district to file affidavits stating the number of unauthorised constructions pulled down by March end and April.

The court will hear the matter next on May 6.

Price rise protest



Policemen restrain Communist Party of India members demonstrating against price rise at Parel on Thursday.

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MUMBAI: The toxic stench emanating from Uttan's garbage dumping ground is strong enough to spread beyond the villages in the Mira Road-Bhayandar region.

Citizens' protest highlighting the health hazards of an open garbage dump have now prompted the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to intervene in the matter.

Acting on a complaint filed by a Delhi-based activist, the NHRC, on March 30 asked the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) and the state's chief secretary J P Dange to submit a report on the alleged health hazards within eight weeks.

The garbage dumping site in Uttan, a township situated 45 kms from Mumbai city, is located atop a hilltop. It is the only dumping site for the garbage generated by the entire Mira Road-Bhayander belt.

Anthony Arulraj, a Delhi-based social activist moved NHRC after he read an article on the Internet about Uttan residents' protest about the threat posed by the dump to the agricultural belt. "Wastewater sliding down the hillside from the garbage recycling plant is contaminating the fields and the drinking water," he alleged in the complaint.

"Most locals depend on paddy farming and vegetable farms for survival. The harm-

12 more grenades found in drain near Sion hospital

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MUMBAI: A day after civic workers found 11 British-era hand grenades from a drain at Sion, 12 more grenades were found from a drain near Sion hospital on Thursday.

The police said the civic workers found the grenades while cleaning the drains between gate number 7 of the hospital and the crematorium. "The grenades appeared to be empty as the clips had been removed from them. We are not very clear whether they contained explosives because these were laden with muck and garbage," said Tulshiram Naagre, senior inspector of Sion police station.

The police said the grenades have been handed over to the Bomb Detection and Disposal

Squad (BDDS) for investigation. Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) officials said they have cleaned the nullah up to a depth of 80 ft.

The workers were cleaning the drains — a routine process before every monsoon to increase the water holding capacity of the drains — to mitigate the effect of water logging.

"We are not undertaking an inquiry in this. The police will," said Assistant Municipal Commissioner Harshad Kale who has been given additional charge of the F-North ward.

The BMC has now decided to lay strict guidelines for the contractors undertaking the cleaning of the drains across the city.

The contractors will be asked to inform the police if the workers find anything suspicious. "Since the cleaning of drains is being done in full swing across

all the wards in the city, the contractors will be told to be careful and alert," said a civic official, requesting anonymity.

The BMC has prepared a standard operation procedure, which lays down the guidelines for the contractors on what to do in case of an emergency.

The police said they are waiting for the report from the BDDS before deciding what to do with the grenades.

"So far, we have not come across any evidence to prove that these belonged to the British-era or that these have any heritage value. We are waiting for the report from the BDDS that would be arriving by Friday based of which future course of action would be decided," Naagre said.

However, an officer said these grenades would be destroyed following examination.

Pollution board to reply on Uttan dumping ground

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"Most locals depend on paddy farming and vegetable farms for survival. The harm-

ful water is killing our fields," said Ronnie Correa, an Uttan resident. "The number of malaria and dengue patients at the local dispensaries has more than doubled because of the polluted water."

Last September, the situation turned ugly when police lathi charged locals blocking trucks piled with garbage from entering the garbage dump. Subsequently, the state issued show cause notices seeking to extern local activists Correa,

James Colaso and Sunny Gadekar from the township. The notices are still pending.

"There has been a series of human rights violations. I hope that NHRC takes cognisance of the problem," said B J Kolse Patil, former judge, Bombay High Court and president of Lokshashan Andolan, a social organisation fighting for the cause.

The dumping ground was reopened in March. MPCB member chief Mahesh Pathak was not available for comment.

Santacruz bus depot leased for Rs 50 crore

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MUMBAI: The Santacruz bus depot plot, measuring 13,00 sq metre, was given on lease for just Rs 50 crore.

The plot is in a prime location on SV Road.

The Brihanmumbai Electricity Supply and Transport Undertaking awarded the lease to Indiabulls on Thursday. Wadhwa Developers and Kanakia were among the developers who had bid for the project. As per the policy framed by the authorities, the winning bidder can commercially exploit 30 per cent of the BEST bus depot.

Ravi Raja, member, BEST committee, said, "I feel the price at which the bus depot has been leased is way too less. The authorities shouldn't go ahead with the deal. The base price was kept at Rs 300 crore. It has gone for pittance considering the location of the bus depot." According to him, the BEST should have earned at least Rs 150 crore from the deal.

The plot houses staff quarters for 450. The developer will have to demolish the existing quarters and construct 600 new quarters. The developer will also build infrastructure

The price at which the bus depot has been leased is too less. The authorities should not go ahead with the deal.

RAVI RAJA, BEST committee member

facilities such as a canteen, a repair division, depot office. These facilities will be provided free of cost to the BEST.

Pankaj Kapur, managing director of Liassas Foras, a leading research firm said: "It is a good deal. Considering the location, the developer can expect good returns and even the BEST will gain from it."

This is the fourth bus depot that has been sold by the BEST. The earlier three were at Oshiwara, Seven Bungalows and Kurla.

After the redevelopment of 7.7-acre Kurla bus depot plot, Mumbai-based Kanakia group is also developing Mahim bus station. Sources said Delhi-based Parsvnath Group, which had originally bagged the project for Rs 32.32 crore in 2007 will hand over the redevelopment rights to Kanakia Spaces for a price exceeding Rs 50 crore.

JUHU ACCIDENT

22-yr-old merchant navy officer held

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MUMBAI: The Santacruz police on Wednesday night arrested the 22-year-old son of brigadier who crashed his Lancer into five senior citizens, injuring them, on Sunday while they were out for a morning walk.

The accused told the police that he fled the spot out of fear.

"Harman Singha (22) was arrested from Khar. He was booked for rash driving and causing grievous hurt. Singha, a merchant navy officer was produced before the court on Thursday where he was granted bail," said senior inspector Madhukar Chaudhary.

On the day of the incident, Singha was returning from JW Marriott Hotel when he lost

control over his Lancer and the vehicle hit five senior citizens standing at the corner of the road near Ramada Plaza.

Based on the number of the car, a police team was sent to Delhi and found that the car belonged to Brigadier J.S. Singha who later told the police that his son Harman had been driving the car in Mumbai.

The police said, Singha confessed that he was behind the wheel at the time of the accident. "Seeing a crowd gathering, he got nervous and fled. He feared he would be beaten if he stepped out of the car," added Chaudhary.

The police added that Singha, along with his friend, had then gone his residence at Khar and they decided not to inform the police about it.

GARBAGE DISPOSAL

- Mumbai has two garbage fill sites at Deonar and Gorai.
- The scientific closure of the third site in Gorai started in January.
- The project involves processing the garbage and converting it into a concrete platform.
- The dumping site at Uttan is located on a hilltop and is the only dumping site for the garbage generated by the entire Mira Road-Bhayander belt.