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# CitiSpace

Citizens' Forum for Protection of Public Spaces

Shri. Prithviraj Chavan  
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Maharashtra  
Mantralaya,  
Mumbai 400032

*22/6/2011*  
मुख्य मंत्र्यांचे सचिवालय  
महाराष्ट्र शासन  
बंगलाळ, मुंबई ४०० ०३२

17<sup>th</sup> June, 2011

Dear Shri. Prithviraj Chavan,

**SUB:** Maharashtra Government plans zoological and botanical park at Aarey Colony  
(refer attached article 1).

CitiSpace (Citizens' Forum for Protection of Public Spaces) is happy to read that the Maharashtra Government is planning to construct a zoological park and botanical garden at Aarey Colony and will help maintain the greenery of Aarey colony.

Established in June 1998, CitiSpace networks over 600 Resident Associations, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), NGOs, Trade/Commercial Establishments and individuals in most of Mumbai's 24 Wards. Our creed is the protection of all Public and Open Spaces (such as Footpaths, Playgrounds, Recreation grounds, Beaches and Mangroves) and advocacy of the rightful use of those spaces. CitiSpace has been working since 1999 to save Recreation Grounds, Playgrounds, Parks and Gardens, which are designated as Reserved Open Spaces in the Development Plan of Greater Mumbai.

CitiSpace has written to you on earlier occasions on various issues related to Mumbai's Reserved Open Spaces and on protecting them from encroachments and construction activity and to ensure that these are kept permeable, open to sky and available to the general public. We are also part of the Environment Mission of Mumbai First and the Government of Maharashtra's Ministry of Environment which will be presenting its views to you shortly.

We would like to bring to your notice CitiSpace's views on the recent plans of MCGM's to build a world class zoo costing Rs.600 crore at the oldest botanical garden in Greater Mumbai i.e. Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Udyan (VJB), locally known as Rani Baug. This plan fortunately was halted due to the persistent and unfaltering resolve of Mumbai's citizens and the Save Rani Bagh Botanical Garden Action Committee backed by many organizations including CitiSpace.

The main reasoning that won out in the end was that

- V.J.B. Udyan's Heritage Botanical Garden with large and small, varied vegetation, including several rare trees and many trees have stood rooted for 300 or more years – it is a unique heritage worth preserving
- The current area of V.J.B. Udyan is too small to accommodate over 800 animals as envisaged by the MCGM.
- It is one of Mumbai's largest green open public space and oldest heritage botanical garden – 150 years old. Given the high level of pollution and congestion, Mumbai sorely needs to preserve one of its vital green lungs.

(enclosed articles 2 & 3)

**Aarey Milk Colony is another very important verdant green lung of Mumbai. It is imperative that this lush land is protected from becoming a concrete jungle and preserved for future generations.**



In the light of the circumstances described above relating to the of the VJB Udyan . CitiSpace urges you to please closely and very carefully study the plans for the proposed zoo and botanical garden envisaged in this verdant area and to ensure that no efforts are spared in conserving the geographical terrain, permeability of the soil and conserving of the natural habitat and bio-diversity of Aarey Milk Colony.

Designated public open spaces are a necessity & not a luxury. They are required for an all rounded well-being of a citizen - for his/her physical, mental, psychological & social health.

It has been our experience that for large projects such as these, often the best practice for any proposals is to observe and take cognizance of the use that the public naturally puts these places to and to involve informed citizens proactively in the process of drawing up these proposals.

CitiSpace believes that it would be only appropriate that a public presentation of any proposal drawn up is made in order to get the opinion of the citizens at large.

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that CitiSpace is in the Bombay High Court (Writ 1152 of 2002) and has received an order disallowing SRA Schemes, rehabilitation on lands reserved as green in the Development Plan of Greater Mumbai, which includes Aarey Milk Colony, NDZ, etc. Cases for rehabilitation on Aarey Milk Colony came up twice and were rejected by the Bombay High Court both times. (encl. Mumbai Mirror clipping of 6.8.10)

CitiSpace would be very happy to meet you to discuss this issue in depth.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,



Nayana Kathpalia  
Co-convenor

On behalf of

Neera Punj  
Convenor

& Core Committee:

Mr. Jekisan Bhatia  
Mr. H. S. D'Lima  
Ms. Vidya Vaidya

Mr. Gerson da Cunha  
Mr. Rajkumar Sharma  
Mr. Atul Vora  
Mr. Sharad Bansal

Mr. Bhanu Desai  
Capt. Joe Lobo  
Dr. Rustum Soonawalla

CC : Shri. Subodh Kumar, Municipal Commissioner

Enclosed as above



## Maha govt plans zoological and botanical park at Aarey Colony

PTI 10:06 AM JUN 12 2011

Mumbai, Jun 12 (PTI) Maharashtra Government is planning to construct a zoological park and botanical garden at Aarey Colony in suburban Mumbai. A committee will be set up to study the feasibility soon. Aarey Colony is a vast stretch of land in western Mumbai which houses a government-run dairy apart from a few private ones. The directive was given by Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan at a meeting of Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries Department recently. Minister of State for Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries, Gulabrao Devkar, told PTI that the proposal for setting up a zoological garden and a botanical park came from the Forest Department. The Park will come up through Public Private Participation (PPP) mode. "The project will help maintain the greenery of Aarey colony, will protect the place from encroachers, and generate some income for the government through tourist inflow," Devkar said. Similarly, the government is also planning to re-develop the Aarey land in Worli, a prime central Mumbai area. "The real estate prices are very high in this area and through re-development, the government can get revenue," he said. The Chief Minister had sought a report from an experts' committee on the proposal, Devkar said. He said that Chavan also directed in the meeting that encroachments spread over 180 acres of Aarey Milk Colony land should be removed and the residents be rehabilitated via Slum Rehabilitation Authority scheme. Chavan also directed the authorities to prepare a plan to set up a state-of-the-art dairy with 10 lakh litre capacity at Kurla.



# Byculla zoo won't see any major revamp



Three years ago, Central Zoo Authority had cleared a Rs 480-crore mega revamp project for the Veermata Jijabai Bhonsale Udyan Zoo at Byculla

Paucity of funds, fear of damage to heritage green cover cited as reasons

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Nearly three years after it was approved and touted as the plan that would change the face of the Byculla zoo, the Rs 470-crore mega revamp project for the zoo is likely to be chucked into the dustbin.

Though initially approved by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), the revamp proposal drawn up by consultants, faced several hurdles.

The Mumbai Heritage Conservation Committee (MHCC) had been arguing for a while that the flora and fauna of the 148-year-old Veermata Jijabai Bhonsale Udyan Zoo would be adversely affected if the revamp project progressed as per the original plan.

Recently, in March, MHCC rejected a new proposal and even sent a

## JUNKED PROPOSALS

- » Night safari
- » Elevated pathway in the aviary
- » Three different areas representing Asia, Africa and Australia continents with their animals
- » A theme park

remark to the CZA, saying that no major changes should be made to the existing set up of the zoo.

Additionally, the new municipal commissioner Subodh Kumar has said that due to paucity of funds, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) would not be able to spend more than Rs 150 crore on the project.

A senior official from BMC said that at a recent meeting Additional

Municipal Commissioner Aseem Gupta and other officials discussed how best could changes be incorporated into the existing set up, while still preserving the flora and fauna.

While initially, there was supposed to be an aviary at the zoo, now only mammals will be housed here. Plans to shift birds and reptiles to a larger zoo being planned at Powai are afoot.

He added, "A separate cat arena, which will have bigger moats for tigers, lions, leopards and other cats will be constructed a four acre plot, which will be carved out of a recently-acquired seven acre land adjacent to the zoo."

Another official said that the enclosures will provide better habitats for the animals. There will also be a separate arena with glass covers so that visitors will be able to watch the animals closely, without any danger.



# Budget-slashed zoo ditches fancy makeovers

BHAGWAN PARAB

5.4.11

MUMBAI

April 4: With the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation deciding to downsize the budget for the makeover plan of the Veer Jijamata Bhosale Udyan, otherwise known as the Byculla zoo, Mumbaikars will have to miss some of the attractive features of this project.

Additional municipal commissioner Aseem Gupta said, "We are not changing the basic design of the project and will also be improving the internal conditions of the animal enclosures. However, keeping in mind the reduced budget, we have decided to stick only to necessary features. Some fancy parts of the project will be done away with."

According to civic



The Byculla Zoo

FILE PHOTO

sources, the BMC has decided to scrap the seven-continents theme, in which animals across the world would have been kept as representatives of the wildlife in these continents. The civic body has already decided to move reptiles and birds to the Powai garden. Moreover, the earlier plan of hav-

ing glass enclosures around the animal cages is also likely to be cancelled.

With an aim to concentrate on infrastructure schemes, municipal commissioner Subodh Kumar has decided to curb expenditure on other projects. Accordingly, the project cost of the Byculla zoo makeover was reduced

"We are not changing the basic design of the project. However, keeping in mind the reduced budget, we have decided to stick only to necessary features."

Aseem Gupta

Addl municipal commissioner

from ₹480 crores to only ₹150 crores.

"The project funds, earlier allocated only for the zoo, will now be divided between the zoo and the newly planned reptile and birds centre in Powai. In the zoo makeover, we will maintain the original structure of the pathways. The additional

land given by the Mafatlal Group will be developed for animals from the cat family," Mr Gupta said.

According to civic sources, with the downsizing of the budget, the BMC's earlier plans of importing exotic animals from other countries may also suffer, due to the lack of funds.

The BMC is going to spend ₹12 crores to preserve the heritage structures inside the zoo, while tenders for upgrading the medical building and the underground parking lot will also be invited.

Spread over 52 acres, the Byculla zoo, established in 1862, is one of the country's oldest zoos. It houses 189 mammals of 20 species, 449 birds of 38 species and 43 reptiles of nine species.



# Welcome to Aareyland

The Dairy Development Ministry has an ambitious dream-plan for the makeover of the Aarey milk colony. Here's a sneak peak at what the new and improved green zone could have in store for you

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**C**hances are, in about five years your escape from road rage on the western express highway will lie in the new-look Aarey Milk Colony abutting it.

If all goes according to the grand plans of the Ministry of Dairy Development, this green zone will have a mini-jungle you can view from elevated walkways, viewing decks at various levels, a city observatory, an aquarium, theme parks and a film studio. Let's not forget that this is a milk colony, you will also be able to get a tour of the state-of-the-art dairy.

The ministry is planning a Rs 7,500 crore makeover for the 3,162 acre expanse. Since part of the land already has residential structures, the master plan focuses on 1,600 acres.

Of these, 500 acres will be retained for the dairy and will entail a dairy village, a milking centre and decks to view the activity from. "We want to meet Israel standards for cattle keeping," said Prakash Thorat of Urban Pandit, which has submitted the initial report to the ministry, of which Mumbai Mirror has a copy.

On 350 acres will be a nature park and bio-diversity centre that will house the area's flora and fauna. The entertainment centre to be set up across 100 acres will include a Bollywood-style film studio, an aquarium, an amusement park, a meditation centre and more. "We are already getting inquiries from players in Singapore, Japan and Universal Studios from the US," said Nitin Raut, Minister for Dairy Development. A certain portion of the land will also have to be used for rehabilitation of over 4,000 slum-dwellers who currently live in the area.

The plan is yet to be cleared by the state government. Not everyone is excited about the project in the No Development Zone. Sumaira Abdulali, an environmentalist, said, "The area is naturally beautiful. There is no need to superimpose artificial structures on it. They come up with fancy plans but they end up handing out more FSI."

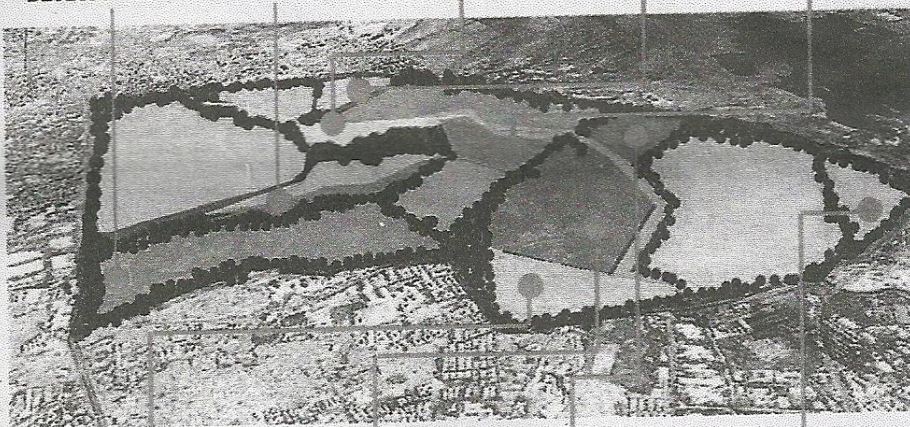
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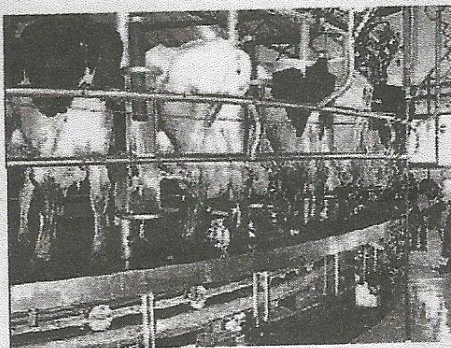


PUBLIC AND PRIVATE  
SPACES

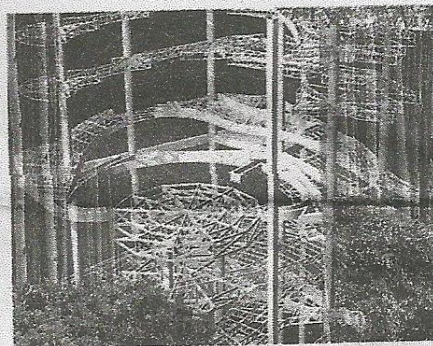
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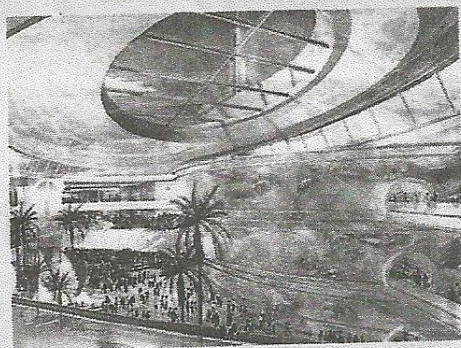
SLUM  
REHABILITATION



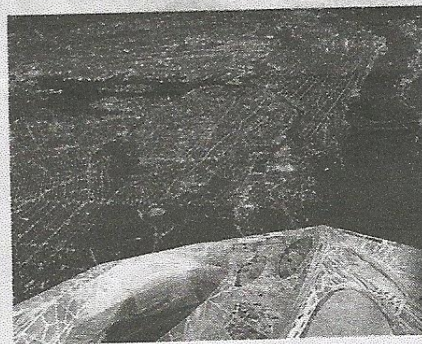
You can take an educational trip to the redeveloped dairy, which will have automatic milking machines



Viewing decks with galleries that let you look at the park from various vantage points



The planners want to make Aarey the site for the largest aquarium in Asia. Global experts will be roped in for its construction



The city's first observatory, which will give you a bird's eye view of Mumbai. The planners hope to make this an architectural marvel

