



Advocacy - Governance - Renewal

Shri Devendra Fadnavis
The Chief Minister,
Government of Maharashtra,
Mantralaya, Mumbai - 400021

January 2⁰⁵, 2015

लिपिक ५१११५
मुख्यमंत्री सचिवालय
मंत्रालय, मुंबई-४०००२१

Subject: Appeal to stop the degradation of Aarey Milk Colony, to give it protected status under environmental laws and develop it as a world class natural outdoors recreation area.

Dear Shri Fadnavis,

We are writing this letter requesting you to personally intervene in the matter of preserving Aarey Milk Colony. Aarey Milk Colony as the name goes was once a hub of the government run dairy business and spread over approximately 1400 hectares of land. Over the years the dairy business has been closing down and there are a number of demands to put the land to alternate uses.

Over the past two decades the demographics and land use of Mumbai has changed enormously. There was a time where there was less population and economic activity in the suburbs but now the area between Bandra and Borivali along the Western Express Highway corridor has been developed and urbanised very heavily. Thousands of new residential and commercial buildings and complexes have been added in this belt making it one of the most densely populated and congested area in Mumbai, with traffic jams and other associated problems increasing rapidly. The corridor has in a sense exhausted its carrying capacity and cannot take further development without conditions getting worse. It is not only the WEH corridor but also the S V Road - New Link Road corridor which has seen extensive development which is still continuing to see growth.

In this scenario of urbanisation in North Mumbai, the Aarey Milk Colony is the only green lung in the north west of Mumbai and provides a very valuable service in terms of

1. Lush tree cover and greenery, which provides fresh air,
2. Absorbs and filters the very high levels of pollution in the area due to the exhaust from millions of vehicles which run on the arterial roads in the vicinity,
3. Cools the atmosphere considerably and
4. Provides a valuable area for exercise and recreation.

You will appreciate that the above four services are as valuable for existence as are jobs and housing and infrastructure. Please also do appreciate that these are ecological services

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provided completely free of cost with no need for installing any air purifiers running on electricity and an annual maintenance contract.

All of this is now under threat due to various reasons. The rapid urbanisation of North Mumbai threatens to engulf and destroy Aarey Milk Colony.

As residents staying in the vicinity of Aarey we are direct beneficiaries of the ecological services of Aarey. We are already faced with very high pollution levels and urban heat island effect in the areas where we live. If Aarey were to disappear there will be a further increase in the pollution levels in the area having a direct impact on our health.

We observe and urge you the following:

1. That the Government of Maharashtra has to urgently take cognizance of the important ecological services that Aarey Milk Colony provides to the residents of not just North Mumbai but all of Mumbai.
2. That the Government of Maharashtra urgently takes the necessary steps to change the status of the land under Aarey Dairy. There is a complete turnaround of the situation since the time when the dairy was set in 1949. Currently maybe the dairy is not required for the city but the same land is providing other valuable services, which the government needs to be cognizant of. The government has a duty towards the health of the citizens and the environment. Accordingly we urge the Government of Maharashtra to provide a strict conservation status to Aarey Colony under relevant environmental laws.
3. That the GoM brings an immediate halt to all planned development activities in the Aarey Dairy area like the widening of the Aarey Road, the proposed extension of the Byculla Zoo on a 200 acre plot within the Aarey area. The road widening is not an urgent requirement and clearly viable alternatives are available. Similarly, the zoo cannot compare with the current natural beauty of Aarey and any plans to locate one in Aarey are vehemently opposed by us.
4. Initiate urgent steps to control the growth of all illegal encroachments within the dairy area. There can be no excuse for the same and the same would not be happening without dereliction of duty happening at multiple levels within the government. We are hearing that there are plans for slum rehabilitation projects within Aarey and will request all such plans to be kept on hold.
5. We request you to initiate an exercise to develop the Aarey Milk Colony area as a high quality regulated outdoor recreation area with camping facilities and other recreational options.

We would like to remind you that in the Constitution of India it is clearly stated that it is the duty of the state to 'protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country'. It imposes a duty on every citizen 'to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife'. Reference to the environment has also been made in the Directive Principles of State Policy as well as the Fundamental Rights. A good environment is important ultimately for the sake of the health of citizens and not just for plants and animals.

We hope the Government of Maharashtra will show its commitment to the quality of life needs of Mumbai citizens to avail of the valuable services provided by Aarey in perpetuity. The Government of Maharashtra under your leadership can set an example of how!

Yours sincerely,

Nayana Kathpalia

Nayana Kathpalia

Gerson da Cunha

Gerson Da Cunha

On behalf of Trustees

Anand Akerkar

D M Sukthankar

Gerson da Cunha

Gerson Da Cunha

Dinesh Ahir

Meher Rafaat

Nayana Kathpalia

Kunti Oza

Neera Punj

Cc to: Mr. Sitaram Kunte, Municipal Commissioner, MCGM

