

Shiv Sena protests against skywalk that isn't even proposed

Corporator says MMRDA was set to build skywalk in Vile Parle (East); MMRDA has no such plan

Ninad Siddhaye

If you thought that carrying out a signature campaign would stop the construction of an unwanted public utility, think again. The Shiv Sena's recent

actions show that it can even halt projects that haven't been planned in the first place.

Local Sena workers, along with corporator Shashikant Patkar, recently carried out a signature campaign against a proposed skywalk that is to come up on the eastern side of Vile Parle station. But, according to officials of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), which is building skywalks throughout the region, no such walkway has been

planned in the area.

The MMRDA is in the process of constructing as many as 60 skywalks throughout the Mumbai metropolitan region. A pedestrian overground link is already under construction in Vile Parle (West).

About a fortnight ago, Sena workers started a campaign to stop construction of the skywalk. Patkar claimed that the pathway would start from Mongibhai Road and connect Nehru Road.

"We got to know that the MMRDA

was planning to build a skywalk in this area," said Patkar. "Officials had finished their survey and were about to begin construction. Our party workers had to throw out the labourers from here.

"Hence we decided to carry out a signature campaign. We managed to get as many as 15,000 people to support us. The verdict is clear; we don't want a skywalk in this area."

Patkar claimed that with two major colleges and many schools around, the

area sees a lot of pedestrian movement and the skywalk would only add to their woes.

But MMRDA officials had a different story to tell. Anand Pahal, in-charge of the project, denied that there was any proposal to construct a skywalk in the area. "We do not have any plan to make a skywalk in the eastern part of Vile Parle. MLA Ashok Jadhav had earlier written to us demanding one. But officially there is no such proposal," Pahal told DNA.

Shashikant Patkar

corporator

Officials had finished their survey and were about to begin construction. Our party workers had to throw out the labourers from here."

speedread

SISTER-IN-LAW SETS WOMAN ON FIRE

A 22-year-old woman suffered 70% burns after her sister-in-law allegedly tried to immolate her in her Bandra residence on Tuesday night. Roshini Powar, a resident of Sane Guruji Chawl in Bandra (West), has been admitted to Bhabha Hospital. In her statement to the police, Powar said that her sister-in-law Amruta poured kerosene on her and set her on fire. The neighbours came to her rescue and rushed her to the hospital. The police are on the lookout for Amruta and her mother Ujjawala, who allegedly is a partner in the crime. The accused regularly harassed Roshini for money.

VERSOVA MAID CONSUMES PHENYL

A housemaid allegedly consumed phenyl after a heated argument with her employer. Shilpa Punjabi, a resident of Bhaktiyani Apartment at Yari Road, lodged a complaint with the police on Monday accusing her maids Sushma Sudhakar, 19 and Nandini Polwal, 18, of stealing Rs12.39 lakh from her safe with the help of duplicate keys. When Punjabi confronted the maids, they had a heated argument. In a fit of anger, Polwal gulped down a small amount of Phenyl. She was admitted to Cooper Hospital and is said to be out of danger. "We have found some money from the houses of the maids. We are investigating the case," said senior inspector S Nalavde.

WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN VAKOLA

A 55-year-old woman was found dead in her residence in Sai Baba Rahivasi Sangh, Vakola, on Thursday. According to the police, Mansi Prabhakar Mahadik, the deceased, was found lying in a pool of blood by a neighbour when she visited her house around 5.30 pm. The neighbour immediately informed the family members about the incident. Mahadik lived with her daughter, son and daughter-in-law. The incident took place when she was alone at home. "We have registered a murder case. The investigation is under way. There are no reports of cash or jewellery missing from the house," said Arvind Mahabadi, assistant commissioner of police, Vakola division.

BMC REMOVES FESTIVAL HOARDINGS

Commercial hoardings and banners calling in religious festivals will not be permitted on public spaces in view of the state elections. Despite pressure from politicians, the civic body has decided to observe the election code of conduct guideline strictly. On Thursday, the BMC removed 41 such hoardings and banners put up on roads to call in Navratni, Ramzan and Mount Mary festivals.

After marathon, city may see cycle-a-thon

BMC plans to set up dedicated tracks to encourage bicycling
Sandeep Ashar

In a bid to promote the bicycle culture in Mumbai, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is flirting with the idea of organising a cycle-a-thon on the lines of the Mumbai Marathon. The idea, which is still at a nascent stage, is already being appreciated. Film actor Rahul Bose is among those promoting it.

The corporation has already begun drawing up plans to set up dedicated bicycle tracks for short-distance travel in several parts of the city. Additional municipal commissioner RA Rajeev said the BMC was in the process of finalising a consultant for studying the concept and identifying neighbourhoods where tracks could be laid.

With growing traffic congestion and a rise in pollution, citizens' groups in areas like Malabar Hill, Bandra Bandstand, Carter Road, Irla, Lokhandwala Complex, and Mulund have been demanding dedicated bicycle lanes. In fact, enthusiasts, students, and parents from 15 schools in Mulund have demanded dedicated lanes and parking space for bicycles on each road in the city.

The Mulund Parents' Association has even initiated an eco-club which promotes cycle rides. "It is a matter of great astonishment that one prefers a luxurious car



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The BMC has begun drawing up plans to set up bicycle tracks for short distance

drive at the cost of polluting the environment. We feel awkward riding a bicycle, which is a better mode of transport for short distances," said Yogesh Katira, president of the association.

Katira blamed the wrong policies of the state government for the disappearance of bicycles. "The road development policies have been car-centric," he said. The association has demanded

dedicated cycle lanes even on bridges and highways.

Katira added that 80% of the population in Amsterdam uses bicycles for daily transportation.

"The association has also asked the civic body to hold cycle races frequently. "This will help to break the myth that it is not trendy to ride a bicycle and help to revive the cycle culture in Mumbai."

Cycles used to be a rage among school and college students in Mumbai a decade ago. Apart from food and milk delivery boys, it is difficult to spot a bicycle on the roads these days.

Cycle-a-thons are extremely popular in the United States and in European cities.

BMC's notice to Wankhede contractor

Sandeep Ashar

The BMC has objected to an "illegal" labourers' colony set up inside the Mumbai Cricket Association's Wankhede Stadium, which is being renovated for the 2011 World Cup final.

A senior civic official said a notice had been sent to Larsen & Toubro, which has been appointed contractors by the MCA. The MCA has also been given a copy of the notice.

The Marine Drive Residents' Association had complained that unhygienic conditions in the labourers' colony inside the stadium were responsible for the spread of malaria in the area.

During an inspection drive carried out by the BMC, the inspectors found that the temporary structures did not have the requisite permissions.

Assistant municipal commissioner Sunil Dhamane said cases of malaria continue to be reported from buildings in and around the stadium. Despite several attempts, MCA officials were unavailable for comment.

Court directs panel to probe SRA complaints

Anshika Misra

All's not well with the the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) schemes. The Bombay high court on Thursday directed a high-powered committee to probe 87 complaints received by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) and other agencies against the SRA schemes.

Observing that the slum rehabilitation schemes are "not working effectively", chief justice Swatanter Kumar and justice SC Dharmadhikari have asked an additional commissioner of police to assist the committee in probing the complaints. The court stated that if the committee finds any illegality or irregularity coupled with "element of criminality" in the complaints, it can regulate, stay or cancel any SRA scheme.

The judgment was passed on PILs filed by social activist Shailesh Gandhi and a city-based NGO seeking court's intervention to order a probe in to the complaints alleging nexus between builders, government officials and

politicians in getting SRA projects sanctioned fraudulently.

Gandhi, who is now a central information commissioner, had alleged that private developers were forging signatures of slum dwellers to reach the 70% consent margin, inflating the number of slum dwellers to increase the free-sale component of the scheme and usurping public lands.

The court noted, "The contention of the state government that it is looking into the complaints in an appropriate manner does not appear to be a bona fide statement. Departments of the government before us are dealing with problems of public significance and social uplift. Thus fairness in action of these departments would be essential."

The court added that the very object of such welfare schemes would stand frustrated if such schemes are hijacked by the property developers and become primary source of commercial transactions."

WR official

Once the new building is in place, the old one on the western side of the station will be demolished."

cluding one for handicapped persons), waiting room, and office spaces will be ready by March 31.

"The second floor, with 14 more booking windows, another food plaza and toilets will come up by June 30," said the WR official. Commuters from Andheri (West) will be able to access the new building through the existing overbridges.

Plans are afoot to construct state-of-the-art station buildings at Jogeshwari and Goregaon too. However, they will have to wait till the laying of additional harbour line tracks between Andheri and Goregaon is completed.

"Once the additional tracks are laid and the platforms are built at both the stations, we will go ahead with the project by procuring land from certain private parties," said an MRVC source.

Designs for the new buildings and the additional platforms at Jogeshwari and Goregaon have been prepared by RITES, a railway undertaking.

"A dome-like structure will be built over the two harbour line platforms to be constructed at Goregaon, with two foot-overbridges on either side of it. The project is expected to be completed by 2013," said the source.

Come April, Andheri stn to have new look

The 3-storey building will house booking counters, waiting rooms, food plazas, office spaces, etc



Shweta Rahul

The under-construction station building on the eastern side of Andheri station is likely to be operational in April next year. The three-storey structure will have all kinds of passenger amenities — ticket booking offices, reservation counters, waiting rooms, food plazas, toilets, lifts, etc. "Once the new building is in place, the old one on the western side of the station will be de-

molished," said a Western Railway (WR) official.

The new building will measure 2,924 sq m — its ground floor spreading over 1,130 sq-m, and the first and the second floors measuring 897sq-m each. Construction work began on November 10. "The ground and the first floors, which will have seven counters for outstation ticket reservation, seven counters for suburban bookings, concourse hall, food plaza, ramp, two lifts, toilets (in-

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