



SATISH MALAVADE

Dedicated space for pets at Five Gardens, Matunga

BJP wants space for pets at all civic gardens in the city

Animal activists welcome the idea, but say BMC must take care to avoid man-animal conflict

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Stressing that pets too deserve some open space, the BJP has moved a proposal in the BMC demanding that every public park and garden in the city must have some dedicated area for domestic animals.

In a space-starved city like Mumbai, BJP's Colaba corporator Makarand Narwekar said, citizens find it difficult to take their pets to public places. "It looks as if owning pets and taking them for a walk is a taboo. The BMC should draft a pet policy and reserve space for the animals in all its parks and gardens."

Mumbai at present has a handful of parks dedicated for pets. There is one at Five Gardens, Matunga, another on Carter Road in Bandra, as well as Priyadarshini Park on Malabar Hill. But their access is restricted to weekends.

A local park along Andheri's Yari Road and a garden in Powai's Hiranandani Complex also turn into pet-friendly zones on weekends.

"The BMC can easily keep a small space aside for pets in all its large parks. They must install dustbins where pet poop can be disposed of," said Narwekar, adding that pet owners often cough up fines for littering in the absence of facilities. "This is just unfair."

Activist Nikhil Desai of the F-North Ward Citizens Federation said pet zones should come up only in big parks. "The BMC must ensure there is enough space for citizens too. One pet park in each locality is enough."

Sunish Kunju of animal rescue group PAWS welcomed the proposal, but cautioned that authorities must avoid man-animal conflict.

MMRC 'misled high court' about hiring tree expert

MMRC had said Singapore-based Simon Leong would be appointed for preserving trees affected by Metro III, but he clarifies he's not associated with the project

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Metro rail planners appear to have misled the Bombay High Court when they said in an affidavit that renowned tree expert Simon Leong would be hired to oversee preservation of trees that will make way for Metro III.

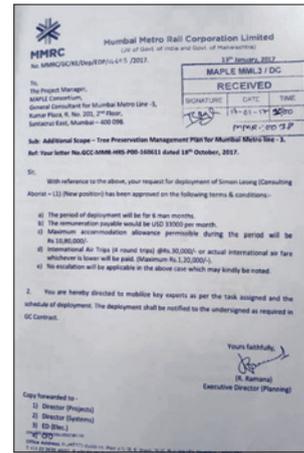
Singapore-based Simon informed *Mirror* in a mail that Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC) had not appointed him and that the remuneration it claimed it would be paying him — \$33,000, or over Rs 21 lakh, a month — was more than his expectations.

The clarification is set to further anger tens of thousands of citizens who fear the construction of the Colaba-Andheri-SEEPZ metro line will diminish Mumbai's already vulnerable green cover. They have accused the MMRC of disregarding serious environmental concerns and downplaying the extent of the eco-damage that the Rs 23,000-crore project will cause.

On February 3, Churchgate residents had filed a petition in the high court against the planned hacking of trees for Metro III. On February 16, the MMRC responded with an affidavit saying it will appoint the best consultant to oversee removal and replantation of trees. It attached a letter which said that arborist Simon's



Arborist Simon Leong. Right: The letter submitted by MMRC that said his appointment had been approved in January



appointment had been approved for the tree preservation management plan. The letter also listed the compensation details, and accommodation and flight allowances. Simon's appointment was approved in January after the MMRC had already marked the trees that would be removed.

An arborist is a specialist in the care and maintenance of trees. Simon's mail to *Mirror* contradicts the affidavit submitted by metro rail planners.

"I think it is important that I provide some clarification. Firstly, I am not the officially appointed arborist for this metro project. There is a possibility another arborist has been appointed. Secondly, the monthly fees (\$33,000 per month) is more than the requested compensation I seek. Thirdly, I had

not provided any guidance on any tree management issue especially tree transplanting for this project," he said.

Activists and environmentalists were furious with the MMRC following Simon's statement. D Stalin, founder of NGO Vanashakti and a member of Aarey Conservation Group, alleged that the MMRC had committed perjury.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg. It is unfortunate that trees have been lost because the court took MMRC's word at face value," he said. "There is no mitigating plan. Everything is only on paper, including the appointment of the arborist."

Zoru Bhatena, one of the petitioners fighting to save trees, also slammed the MMRC. "MMRC officials said in the court that they will do their best

More Aarey land goes to Metro

After granting a huge chunk of Aarey Colony for Metro III car shed, the state has given three more plots for the Andheri East-Dahisar metro line. *Mirror* had reported on Feb 6 that MMRDA was eyeing space in Aarey for Metro Bhavan, a workers' camp, and a casting yard — all of which will come up as part of Metro 7. Now, 4,887 square metres have been reserved for a remote receiving sub-station, 8,000 square metres for storing machinery, and setting up a labour camp and a casting yard. Another huge plot has marked for Metro Bhavan, which will be a control centre.

—Yogesh Naik

to take care of the trees. We asked them for documents to know who they had hired and they submitted an appointment letter along with a covering note stating that Simon Leong was approved for the job," Bhatena said. "The MMRC never had the intention to transplant trees. We want Simon on board."

An MMRC spokesperson did not comment on Simon's appointment, but said an expert had been roped in. "A specialised, well qualified and a member of Singapore Arboriculture Society appointed by General Consultants has started working," the official said.

Top cop's 'radical' try gets nod from Muslims

Commissioner's off-the-record meet with community leaders other than religious heads opens a conversation about ways in which radicalism can be countered

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TWEETS @MumbaiMirror

Mumbai Mirror has learnt that the top cop last month chaired a classified meeting with non-religious Muslim intelligentsia in a bid to re-engage the community to counter extremist threats by inviting "unorthodox" suggestions for integrating troubled sections of the community.

On May 23, police commissioner Datta Padsalgikar hosted prominent academicians, philanthropists, thinkers, and leading figures from the community to debate ways to augment inter-faith relations, and bolster the community's "working chemistry" with the police.

About 90 people gathered for the first such meeting, which also saw joint police commissioner Deven Bharti and additional commissioner (special branch) Ravindra Shisve in attendance.

The congregation, which sought to open a conversation with a different set of stakeholders, was pivoted on the idea that "policing is not what you do to the people but what you do with the people".

One of the attendees, Dr Khalid Shaikh, director of Sai group of hospitals, said, "The aim was to bridge the gap between the police and Muslims. We need to work for the betterment of society and it is possible only if we do it together."

Padsalgikar, a former Intelligence Bureau officer, told Mumbai Mirror: "We touched on the aspects of bettering social interactions, tailored to chime with a series of social investments that can offset the problems we face as a society."

The meeting hoped to reinforce the communal fabric of Mumbai, one of the world's most vulnerable cities in terms of being a target for jihadists, which faces routine threats by an "army" of Daesh-inspired radicalized local youths.

The attendees agreed that "campus radicalisation" is gaining potency more than ever,

since colleges and universities have become virtual recruiting grounds for terror operators. The problem is aggravated by the ease

The meeting hoped to reinforce the communal fabric of Mumbai, the cops said

with which students can be brainwashed through social media channels into aligning with deviant ideologies.

In this context, professors and teachers can play a central role in spotting and countering fanaticism, it was discussed.

Another attendee, Dr Zaheer Qazi, president of Anjuman Islam School, said, "A main area of concern is misguided youths. We need to identify the problem within and take corrective steps. It was a fruitful discussion and we are looking forward to more such meetings."

The meeting also stressed the need to identify words and actions that are offensive and youths who "demonstrate traits of being intensely radicalised and extreme in their actions and behaviour."

The need for having community liaison officers, who can don representative roles, and reviving ersatz mohallah committees, too, figured in the meeting's charter.

Actor's murder in Amboli Choudhury killed 4 days ago: cops

The Amboli police yesterday registered a case of murder in relation to the death of actor Kritika Choudhury. Choudhury, a resident of Shri Bhairavnath Society, in Amboli, was found dead at her residence on Monday. The cops picked up several people who were in touch with Kritika for questioning. A police officer said that a scrutiny of the CCTV footage at the apartment complex had provided them with some clues. "We are questioning a grocery shop owner and the watchman of the building," said the officer.

The police said Choudhury was murdered four days ago. "She has injuries on her head. The killer switched on the air conditioner, set it to 19 degrees centigrade, shut the windows and fled. That probably helped mask the smell of decomposition for some time," said the officer.