

Chimbai beach to get facelift

Residents' efforts to save seafront forces a reluctant BMC to take charge

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BANDRA MAY soon have another waterfront to be proud of. If everything works well, the little known and disappearing Chimbai Beach will get a makeover with features like promenades and fish-food courts.

The Chimbai beach is a one-km stretch between Joggers' Park and Bandra Bandstand.

Credit goes to the local residents, who have been fighting to save the beach for two years. Impressed by their efforts, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has now taken over to develop the seafront. The BMC has appointed architect P.K. Das as a consultant.

"We will spend Rs 4 crore for this public-private project. We will meet the architect and then discuss the plans with the stakeholders around the area," said Anil Diggikar, additional municipal commissioner (Projects). The plan also includes a drying area for local fishermen.

The beach — an extension of Chimbai fishing village — is a sorry picture. A number of illegal structures line the narrow lanes leading to the waters, while rocks bordering the sea

have been dumped with debris.

"We will replace this with sand-terraces, promenades and resting areas. There will also be a food court on weekends where locals will make fish delicacies," said Das.

"This would not have been possible without the persistent effort of citizens."

It all began after the fisher folk of Chimbai approached the H-West Ward Residents' Trust to stop the Maritime Board from constructing a 'tsunami wall' along the coastline after the 2005 deluge. "The flooding was actually because of the debris," said Shyama Kulkarni, chairman of the trust.

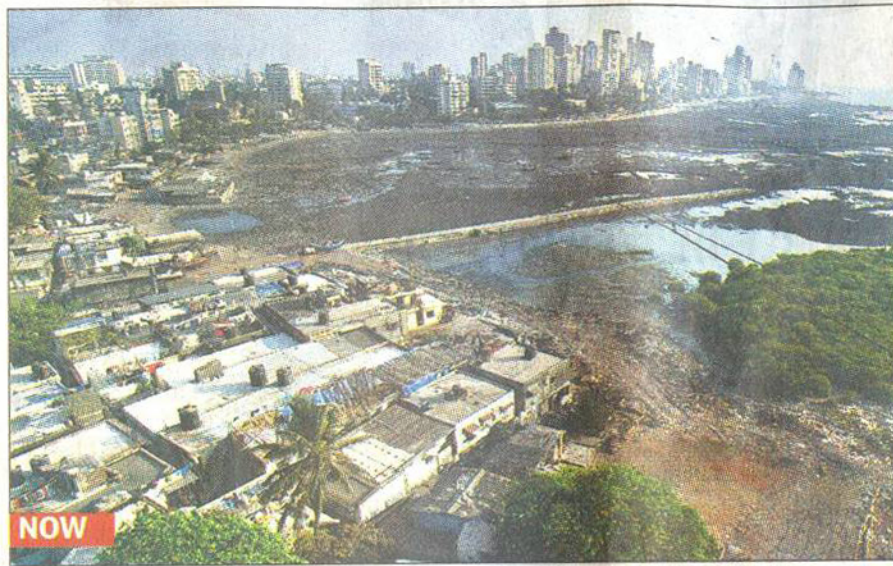
The BMC had then expressed its inability to clear the debris saying JCBs could not reach the beach. But Bandra resident Vikram Rao, using personal funds, cleared 40 truckloads of debris from the site. A surprised BMC then took over.

"We are glad the plan has moved ahead, while the BMC and collector have promised to clear the encroachments," Kulkarni said, adding that there were still about 100 truckloads of debris on the site.

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Bandra's Chimbai beach stretches from Joggers' Park to Bandstand.

