

# Sewage treatment plant turns into city's largest garden

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Commuters will no longer have to turn their nose away while the local train passes by Dadar as a erstwhile sewage treatment plant (STP) plot at Dadar has made way for the city's largest garden.

Flanked by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC's) sewerage operations (SO) and storm water drains department building on either side and railway tracks behind its rear side, the 14-acre park now has ponds with lillies and lotuses and is home to around 2.5 lakh trees of 180 species.

The main entrance, currently completely hidden by fish trucks and buses parked along the Senapati Bapat Marg, reveals the gar-

den's name as "Pramod Mahajan Kala Park". The park, whose inauguration will now be stalled till after the elections, will be handed over to the BMC's garden department for maintenance.

"Not long ago, the ponds were used as primary sediment tanks. We decided to use the pits that already existed as well as retain all the trees in the complex as part of the garden project," said a senior official from the BMC's sewerage operations department.

Besides saving the pre-existing 100-plus trees, the SO department has converted a huge sewage digester plant into a ziggurat-inspired garden structure. The top of the digester, where gas was produced from the sewage, was demolished and the pit filled for a lawn and plants all around the steps and ramped ziggurat struc-



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ture. Three primary sediment tanks were converted into ponds, with one housing a population of fishes and turtles, an official pointed out. The fourth tank is used for rainwater harvesting pond with a fountain.

Although the STP was offi-

cially shut down in 1999, the 14-acre plot was in a state of disuse and was "smelly", said another official.

It took the sewerage operations department seven years to convert the plot into a garden. "Once the plant was shut down,

the plot was used to dump silt. There were also a few squatters on the plot. We decided to re-vamp it and create a green space in central Mumbai. It is perhaps the first time SO department has created a garden," said a senior official from the SO department.

In another part of the garden is a poly carbonate structure "prism" under which rows of seasonal plants such as begonias have been planted. "In a few months, none of the pots will be visible as the greenery around it will hide them and only the multi-coloured shade-loving varieties will be visible," said the horticulturist there. This area earlier housed aeration tanks.

The flower beds outside the prism were the drying beds for the sludge, where manure was produced.

The entire project, including two six-floor buildings and the garden, cost the SO department around Rs 29.5 crore. The only remnant from its STP days is a large sewage filter tank, which is now cleaned, locked up and left untouched within the park. "This structure could be used as an art gallery, perhaps. Budget limitations meant we could not do it ourselves," said the official.

The park also houses a cafeteria overlooking one of the ponds. Around 200 benches line the jogging tracks.

The SO department plans to use the treated water from the sewage pumping station, which still exists on the plot, to water the garden and supply the excess treated water to neighbouring gardens, the official added.

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