

  
**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

A Plan To Turn Waterfronts Into Scenic Leisure Spots & A Slumdwellers' Initiative

# **PROVIDING THE CITY A SEA-FRONT CHANGE**



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**To Help The Needy Are Lauded For Improving Life In Mumbai**

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** When a lackadaisical city government allowed one of its biggest assets—the waterfronts—to deteriorate into dumpyards and be used as open-air toilets, a determined group of citizens thought it was time to take charge. Over the last six years, thanks largely to a citizens' initiative, about seven kilometres of Mumbai's western waterfronts have been reclaimed and turned into what architect P K Das calls the city's "cultural forecourts".

On Thursday, this perseverance finally paid off when the Mumbai Waterfront Improvement Centre (MWIC), a recently registered trust, shared the \$100,000 Deutsche Bank Urban Age Award with another organisation for helping "transform the lives of Mumbai's citizens".

Das, one of the four trustees who received the award on behalf of the MWIC, has been largely credited with transforming Bandra Land's End and the Bandstand and Carter Road promenades, as well as the 4-km stretch of Juhu beach. He has done all this with the active support of resident associations and funds from local MPs.

A maverick housing activist, Das said he faced threats of physical violence when food stalls that had encroached on Juhu beach were sought to be relocated. "Our waterfronts are now unbarricaded public spaces, which are truly open and democratic in nature," he told TOI after receiving a Rs 20 lakh cheque, the MWIC's share of the award.

Civic activist and co-trustee of the MWIC, Darryl D'Monte, who has been in the forefront of maintaining the two Bandra promenades, said, "It has been sometimes a long and painful struggle



**PUTTING A SHINE ON OUR SHORES:** The Bandstand promenade is a popular evening haunt for people from across Mumbai. (Above left) At the Khar end, the Carter Road promenade is designed to project into the rocks. (Above right) Strollers at Carter Road. (Below, from left) Actress and MP Shabana Azmi, Deutsche Bank chairman Josef Ackerman, architect P K Das and his MWIC colleague with their Rs 20 lakh cheque

to get these projects going. Very often we have to do so in spite of the authorities. Six years after the inception of the two promenades in Bandra, we are facing opposition from the Maharashtra Maritime Board, which thinks it owns these public properties."

D'Monte accused the board of refusing the citizens' association permission to repair the sea walls, repave the structures and remove unauthorised encroachments.

The MWIC plans to utilise the prize money for its plan for the Dadar-Prabhadevi

beach, which is 4km long and suffers from erosion. "The plan aims to check the erosion and to regain the beach for public use in one of the most congested areas of the island city," said the MWIC.

The Versova waterfront is the other project that Das plans to take up. The centre also proposes to survey and map water bodies, rivers, creeks and seafronts so it can plan public spaces.

### THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

- Helped build the Carter Road promenade at Bandra, transforming what was a neglected and encroached seafront into a lively place for the public
- Similarly helped transform the Bandstand promenade
- Spruced up Land's End, where Bandra fort stood, and built an amphitheatre there
- Helped spruce up Juhu beach, especially by relocating ugly and intrusive food stalls to a proper food court

### ON THE ANVIL

- A plan to reinvigorate the Dadar-Prabhadevi beach, which is 4km long and suffers from erosion. The MWIC wants the public to use the beach again
- Reviving and sprucing up the Versova waterfront
- Proposal to study, survey and map rivers, creeks, other water bodies and seafronts so more public spaces can be created
- Hold workshops, spread information

### THE GOAL: TO OPEN UP OUR WORLD

The Mumbai Waterfront Improvement Committee (MWIC) was registered as a trust only a couple of months ago, but it has been involved in transforming the city for several years now. Its main aim is to create places along waterfronts, and maybe even other water bodies, for the public to relax and snatch much-needed moments of leisure.

"The 44 kilometres of the western coast have never been considered in the planning and development process as an integral part of the city's land. On the contrary, the waterfronts have been constantly abused by reclamation, sewage disposal and encroachment. Yet, for the millions who live in our crowded city, the waterfronts are the only major open spaces—whether it is Marine Drive or Chowpatty, Haji Ali or Worli Seaface, Dadar beach or Bandra Bandstand, Carter Road or Juhu beach, or Versova," states the project description of the MWIC.





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**WHAT THEY PLAN  
TO DO WITH THE  
MONEY**

The MWIC has plans to revive the 4-km Dadar-Prabhadevi beach, which is facing erosion. The team wants the public in one of the most congested parts of the island city to have an outlet for socialising, strolling and relaxing. Sprucing up the Versova waterfront and other proposals are also in the pipeline.