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# PUBLIC EYE

*Coming together  
is a beginning.  
Keeping together  
is progress.  
Working together  
is success.*

NEWSLETTER OF NEPEAN SEA ROAD CITIZENS' FORUM: ISSUE NO. 27

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## THE JURY IS STILL OUT ON THE MYSTERY OF THE CELL TOWERS

If you missed the symposium organized by Nepean Sea Road Citizens' Forum and Altamount Road Area Citizens' Committee on October 10, 2010 you missed hearing important and very convincing arguments on the safety or otherwise of the radiation by cell phone towers – a subject that has grabbed the attention of citizens and now also of the government.

### Experts speak

Kudos to the two organising associations for an excellent panel and for managing time optimally. The panel comprised Mr Vikas Bonde, Head of Network Planning and Optimisation at Loop Mobile; Prof Girish Kumar from Indian Institute of Technology; Mr A L Pandey of Telecommunication Enforcement Resource Monitoring Cell; Mr Prakash Patel, resident of Usha Kiran at Carmichael Road and Mr Chander Uday Singh, reputed advocate. The panel discussion was chaired by Dr Subhash Desai.

The symposium lasted an information-loaded two hours. Speakers for and against were both erudite and expert in their respective fields and considerably armed with facts and figures. The gathering of close to 100 citizens gained considerable information, facts and opinions and are now in a better position to take an informed stands

in this matter. Public Eye's motto – informed citizens make better citizens – was underlined by this symposium.

### And the verdict?

At the end of it all, the jury was still out. No clear direction can be adopted at present. As the Chairman and Moderator, Dr Subhash Desai rightly summed up, more intensive studies of longer duration with clear parameters need to be conducted by government and independent research bodies to arrive at a meaningful consensus. Meanwhile, the government must set safe-level standards for the electro-magnetic rays from cell towers, and monitor their performance. In fact the safety levels declared by major advanced countries vary considerably and that

does not help us in India take a bench-mark decision. For example, India's levels for radio frequency fields of 9.2 watts per sq m compares very poorly with New Zealand's 0.5 watts, Russia's 0.02 watts and Australia's 0.0001 watts. Strangely, the US and UK and Sweden have far more lax safety levels!

### Where do we go from here?

Dr Subhash Desai's summing up was both balanced and simple enough for all to understand. First, he said, India needs to initiate major scientific studies—and such studies of the effect of electro-magnetic rays on the human system will of course take many years.



Meanwhile, the government must declare the provisionally acceptable standards urgently after analyzing those of many developed nations.

He was pragmatic enough to acknowledge that mankind is too far down the road to stop using the various electronic devices that emit potentially dangerous rays. TV, computers, microwave ovens, wi-fi systems and cell phones are now part of life. Dr Desai's recommendation? Switch off the mains whenever not in use and avoid keeping electronic devices on 'sleep' or stand-by mode. Use these items sparingly as



extended exposure has the possibility to harm. And his advice to buildings was to avoid as far as possible the setting up of cell towers on the terraces, no matter the financial benefits. *(Editor: Some buildings have about 10 cell phone towers. Remember, Greed Is Bad!)*

This was one more Community Service Initiative Programme of the Forum. NSRCF will continue this activity on various other important subjects for citizens and believes the response from citizens will continue to grow.



*The panel of experts- for and against cell towers*

## THE MORE YOU READ, THE MORE THERE IS TO WORRY!

Soon after the symposium, Public Eye read an interesting news item in Bombay Times of 28th October –

### IS PUTTING A CELLPHONE IN YOUR POCKET A HEALTH RISK?

Here are the important extracts. Read and make up your own mind.

- ⊗ Consider the little noticed bit of legalese that comes in the safety manual for a smartphone that was recently released with much fanfare: “When using the phone near your body for voice calls or for wireless data transmission over a cellular network, keep phone at least 15 mm (5/8 inch) away from the body, and only use carrying cases, belt clips, or holders that do not have metal parts and that maintain at least 15 mm (5/8 inch) separation between phone and the body,” the warning reads.
- ⊗ The safety manual for a Canadian smartphone company's product tells users that they may

violate Federal Communications Commission (FCC) guidelines for radio-frequency energy exposure by carrying the phone outside a holster and within 0.98 inches (2.5 cm) of their body. The safety manual of another phone tells users to always “keep the active device one full inch away from their body, if not using a company approved clip, holder, holster, case or body harness.”

### SHOULD THEY BE CALLED “LAPTOPS”?

To add to your knowledge, the Times of India of 9th November had this to report.

- ⊗ Using a laptop computer may not be good for your reproductive health, according to a study published in ‘Fertility and Sterility’. “Within 10 to 15 minutes the scrotal temperature is already above what we consider safe, but they don't feel it”. *(Editor – Should government issue free laptops as part of its population control planning??)*

## WIDER? YES. BETTER? NO!

Remember the traffic chaos and jams in the northern stretch of Nepean Sea Road? That's a thing of the past, after it was widened.

Remember the quality of NSRoad then? It was in many ways better than after the widening.

The entire road widening was completed within a few months in early 2009, and residents of NSRoad congratulated BMC.

That was before the '09 monsoon which left the road in shambles and incomplete in its project work. Despite several follow up meetings with D Ward and with the Central Roads Department, the project seems to have come to a crawl, if not a stop. The only work in over a year was the hasty patchwork repairs done when the road sank in a number of spots in the monsoon.

What is the BMC doing? residents ask. And what is the Governing Council of NSRCForum doing?

The Forum – the citizens, in fact – were promised that the underground work of storm water drains and water pipes will be done with speed, the road levelled and re-surfaced, new pavements with paver blocks, a central road-divider, trees to line the stretch and some beautifications. Two years have passed and we find that-

- Work on some water pipes and storm water drains has yet to be completed.
- The road has not been levelled or resurfaced properly and extensive patch work was needed during the last two monsoons as there were more pot holes than flat surfaces.
- The pavements have been done but the workmanship leaves a lot to be desired.
- The central divider – a safety necessity -- cannot be done till all the other work is completed nor can the beautification take place

### NSRCForum's follow up

We have had discussion with the erstwhile Additional Commissioner, the Asst

Commissioner at D Ward as well as the Chief Engineer, Roads, and we are told that the following is the status:

1. A budget is in place for Rs 21 crores for the whole road – about 1,775 metres – from St Stephen's Church to Atlas Apartments.
2. Tenders have been floated and bids received and evaluated. (*What took that long?*)
3. The matter is pending for final approval between the BMC Head Quarters and the Corporation. (*And how long will that take??*)
4. The work should commence in December 2010 but in phases and will include: completion of water pipes and storm water drains, levelling and resurfacing the road with asphalt, proper / repaired pavements and a central road divider.
5. And, at best, one phase (from about 3 phases) will be completed before the 2011 monsoon arrives (*So when will the full work be over?*)

### Citizens' concerns

- If the work has not been awarded till mid-December will any phase be completed before the start of the 2011 monsoon?
- And when is the full project expected to be completed?
- Underground utilities' cabling must be ducted – as BMC is now intending for new road works – or the newly made road and pavements will continue to be dug up and patched up.
- Any discussions with the Traffic Police should involve us; because we are aware of the concerns as well as the needs of the local population

*Public Eye says: "Tried pushing an elephant? That's what the Governing Council has been attempting!"*

## “BACHAO HUMARI MUMBAI KI JAAN, BAAG, BAGEECHA AUR MAIDAN”

Citisspace conveners Neera Punj and Nayana Kathpalia enlightened and engaged with citizens of Nepean Sea Road at a talk organized by the NSRCF entitled ‘Save Our



*Punj: “Save Our Open Spaces”*

eager to make a difference.

The event shed light on the various acts, rules and regulations common citizens are empowered with to enforce their right to open public space, demonstrated the drastically diminishing open spaces available in Mumbai, what this does to the physical and mental well-being of an individual and exposed 93 public spaces that



*Kathpalia: “Beware the Caretaker Policy.”*

Open Spaces’. Held appropriately at the Priyadarshini Park, NSRoad’s beautiful open space for the public, the turnout ranged from concerned students to senior citizens, all

are reserved as open spaces in our area but are being violated or being illegally occupied.

Citisspace, which has been steadfastly fighting for open spaces in Mumbai city, showed

how little we have in comparison to what is legally the right of us citizens. According to CitiSpace, under The National Building Code (Government of India) for the Development Plan of Greater Mumbai, the standard set is 4 acres per 1000 people. But today citizens have a mere 0.03 acres per 1000 persons.

To better understand what this means, they explained, as per the Development Control Regulations, 13x13 feet of open space per person is every citizen’s birthright. And what do we actually have today? Just 13 x 13 inches, not even enough for an individual to stand!!

### How about the Caretaker Policy?



*Desai: “Lack of political will endangers the coastline.”*

CitiSpace urged citizens to demand a repeal of the Caretaker Policy, because it permits the “Caretaker” to develop 25% of the already limited open spaces for clubs and other commercial uses (Though much more is

in fact used up in real life). Further, the remaining 75% which should remain accessible to the public is almost always fenced in and the public denied entry.

Punj and Kathpalia stressed on citizen-groups to police such “take-overs” and alert the authorities. They gave several examples of open spaces where private individuals, trusts and companies had taken over public land under the guise of ‘caretaking’

## How about the “Adoption Policy”?

This allows citizen-groups or local residents to adopt an open space provided they take care of it, ensure no squatters take over, and maintain and keep it clean for the public to enjoy. While this is a better option, very few have volunteered because it can cost up to Rs 5 lakhs per acre in year one to fence it, level it, staff it etc and about Rs 50,000 per year thereafter.

## So what’s the answer?

Punj and Kathpalia amazed the audience when they announced that BMC actually has a budget that is adequate to protect and maintain the 940 acres of remaining open spaces of Mumbai!

## Mr B A Desai speaks

Ending the evening was another telling presentation on encroachments by the sea all along Nepean Sea Road, by advocate B. A. Desai, the Chief Guest of the event, patron of PDP and an ardent supporter of open spaces. He showed how illegal constructions have been carried out on reclaimed and CRZ land And how lack of political will endangers the coastline of this beautiful island city.

The event ended with a resolve for citizens to take greater initiative in protecting the open spaces in the area as they truly are the “lungs” of a city. A well deserved vote of thanks was made and bouquets were presented to both, the speakers from CitiSpace and the Chief Guest.

## SEWAGE WATER FOR SALE!

Read about what NMMC is doing

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) would soon be the first municipal body to put treated sewage water on sale to industries in the area that are crying for more water supply.

## But clean enough for what?

What buildings can learn from this is that the recycled sewage water can be used safely for a number of things.

Has your building ever counted how many buckets are used daily for cleaning and swabbing the lobbies and the passages on each floor? For washing all the cars? For watering the plants / garden on your premises? Convert that into litres and you will realize how much you can save of the good, potable water given by BMC.

If you are using only BMC water, then calculate the savings by converting those many litres into rupees at BMC’s rates and see how much you would save every year.

If you are also buying tanker water, then calculate the savings at the rate at which you buy the tanker water.

Citizens should start “investing” in Water Treatment Plants now. They are not as expensive as you would expect. And the investment would be recovered in a few years – after which, it would all be savings on your water charges.

You can also learn from NMMC what to do if the water from the Treatment Plant is more than you need – NMMC sells it to industries. Your building can sell it to neighbouring buildings!

## Any actual workings?

One major building with about 60 flats found it could get enough treated water every month to get back its investment in 3 to 4 years! Do your own calculations for your building – it’s simple.

## Time to act. Time to stop complaining.

Many buildings complain that they are not getting “adequate” water. Well, the BMC is supposed to give 125 litres per person, 5 persons per flat. If you need more water --- pay for tanker water. That cost more and is not as safe.

Time to stop complaining and start “investing” in a Water Treatment Plant now.

## BEWARE -- FIRE HAZARD!

Most buildings in Mumbai are ill-equipped to deal with a fire on their premises. This, despite the Mumbai Fire Brigade's efforts at informing and educating the public on the hazards of a fire in occupied buildings. With more and more high-rises coming up, the fire hazard is multiplying.

Now the hazard will be penalties and fines for all defaulters under the **new Maharashtra Fire Prevention and Life Safety Measures Act, 2009**. More important, for our own safety we should act on the mandates under the new Act.

- Install and maintain in working condition smoke alarms on every level of the building.
- Replace batteries in smoke alarms at least once or twice a year; and replace the entire unit after 10 years of service.
- The staircases and open spaces must be kept free and unencroached.
- Fire extinguishers should be placed on every floor and in the main lobby areas.
- Special water tank is to be reserved only for fighting fires

These are some of the essential mandates under the Act. Most of these are common sense ideas, but we all know that common sense is not very common amongst citizens. So, to give teeth to the law, the Chief Fire Officer of Greater Mumbai or any accredited official will now conduct an audit twice a year.

Defaulters can face a penalty ranging from Rs 30,000 to Rs 1 lakh. If a building fails to comply after an audit and a caution, offenders (Managing Committees of co-ops?) will face



prosecution in the courts.

**That's the bad news.**

**The good news is –**

that the Governing Council of NSRCForum has been in touch with the Chief Fire Officer and his deputies. The Forum expressed special concern at the number of high-rise buildings coming up, mostly in northern NSRoad where there is inadequate space for the fire engines to maneuver. This is a hazard not only for such buildings but also for the adjacent buildings. The CFO is ready to engage with residents and buildings on NSRoad to inform them of what the Fire Department can do to advise now, before tragedies strike.

*The Governing Council plans to hold a meeting in early 2011 and hopes that the attendance will be great. After all, it is all for our own safety.*

### SOME FACTS ABOUT THE MUMBAI FIRE BRIGADE

- With an area of about 430 sq kms and a population crossing 16 million, Mumbai is served by 6 Regional Command Centres. For us at NSRoad, it is at Byculla.
- There are 33 Fire Stations manned by 195 officers and 2204 fire fighters, served by a fleet of over 200 well equipped "bumbas".
- The nearest Fire Station for NSRoad is at Nana Chowk. (It is time we had a fire station in our area to serve all of Malabar Hill!)
- This team fights fires, helps in rescue operations and house collapses and various other services – often risking their lives to save others.

The Fire Brigade deserves our support and admiration. It also deserves our co-operation.

Please note the emergency lines for the  
Mumbai Fire Brigade

100 and 23076111 / 2 / 3

**Merry Christmas ??**



"Frankly, Mr Clause, we don't understand—two days ago you had assets worth billions — today, nothing..."

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12/10



**....and a prosperous  
New Year !**

# NSRCF

## NEPEAN SEA ROAD CITIZENS' FORUM

Registered office : c/o society office of "Urvashi"  
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### MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR INDIVIDUALS

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Surname) (First Name)

Residential address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed cheque

No. \_\_\_\_\_ dated \_\_\_\_\_ drawn  
on \_\_\_\_\_ (Bank)

for Rs. 250 as Individual Membership for the year  
April 2011 to March 2012

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR INSTITUTIONS / BUILDINGS

Name of Building \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Office Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed Cheque

No. \_\_\_\_\_ dated \_\_\_\_\_ drawn  
on \_\_\_\_\_ (Bank)

for Rs3000 as Institutional Membership for  
April 2011 to March 2012

Signature and  
stamp \_\_\_\_\_

## BMC DATA-BASE NOW AVAILABLE ON-LINE

Citizens have often fretted about the legality of many activities. Does this shop have a license? For what? Which hawkers are licensed in your area? How do you get a license for the dog you got your grandchild for Christmas? Want a birth certificate but don't know how? Want to know what permissions have been granted to new buildings in your area?

Now BMC has opened its vast data base and citizens can get



loads of information just by clicking on ,  
**[www.mcgm.gov.in](http://www.mcgm.gov.in)**

What is encouraging is that the website ushers in a transparency in many matters of concern to citizens. Additionally, the website promises easing service delivery to citizens. The website is quite comprehensive.

Try it and convince yourself!

## INDIA POST TAKES ONE STEP FORWARD

In today's world, with change of jobs, with transfers etc, many people often shift residence. For them, it is difficult to produce an address proof issued by Government with the latest address.

India Post (our postal service) has come up with a simple solution.

Now you can get an official proof of address with your photo from India Post. Since the ID proof is issued by India Post which is a Central Government organization, it is similar to other ID cards like Driving License, Voters ID etc. It can be used for opening bank accounts, for

getting telephone and gas connections etc.

The total cost for getting this ID card is Rs.250 (Rs.10 for application and Rs.240 processing fee).

For more details enquire at your friendly Malabar Hill Post Office.



*Public Eye*  
*wishes its readers*  
*A Happy, Prosperous,*  
*Peaceful*  
*New Year*