

DEEPAK TURBHEKAR



BMC okays a makeover that will create selfie spots, art installations, and landscapes below the 2.4-km flyover

Pretty underbelly for Lalbaug flyover



A visualisation of the art installations planned under the flyover, which runs through Mumbai's former mill district

Work to begin this month, may set a blueprint for the revamp of similar under-the-bridge spaces in city

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The drab spaces under the Lalbaug flyover will soon be transformed into corners of colour, art and amusement with the city administration approving a long-discussed

beautification programme.

Art installations, dry landscape gardens, selfie points in front of a new large typographical exhibit reading 'Lalbaug', and other visual elements will live up the 21 segments below the bridge that runs through Mumbai's former mill district.

The plan, which had been under consideration for at least

three months, was cleared by the BMC last Saturday and the work will begin later this month. It could help set a blueprint for the makeover of similar spots across Mumbai.

The spaces beneath a flyover, which are often taken over by illegal hawkers and

MSD has Mumbai on its feet, and one Mumbaikar at his feet

Fans thronged the Brabourne Stadium yesterday to cheer their hero's last game as India captain

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In the end it didn't matter that he lost his last game as India captain, or India 'A' captain, more accurately. What the heck, he's only quit the captaincy, but the turnout at the hallowed Cricket Club of India to cheer him on his captaincy swansong rivalled farewells of some of India's greatest players.

It seemed fanciful till yesterday that Mumbai had eyes for anyone other than its favourite son, who's now happily nestled into retirement. But late in the afternoon when a young fan tried to prostrate himself before Mahendra Singh Dhoni, you knew Mahi stood shoulder-to-shoulder in terms of popularity with Sachin Tendulkar in this city of dreams. As evident at the CCI yesterday, Mumbai has taken to Dhoni in much the same way.

Fans abandoned their bags on the top of a bus stop adjacent to the Cricket Club of India in order to be allowed unimpeded access to Dhoni's last match as India captain even if it was only a practice tie against England. According to a rough estimate, the attendance yesterday touched 20,000 in the afternoon – CCI has a capacity of 35,000 – when it was announced that India will bat.

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Lalbaug flyover underbelly to undergo beautification

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unauthorised parking, have a tremendous potential as recreation zones for nearby residents in a city where parks stay open for only a certain hours.

If developed and managed properly, the spaces can help instil a sense of neighbourhood pride and ownership among residents, improving their engagement with their locality.

In June last year, the city's first garden under a flyover was opened in Matunga. It has a walking track and a staking area for children, drawing hundreds of visitors every day.

The segments under the 2.48-km Lalbaug bridge, which connects Parel to Byculla, are currently in a state of neglect. But they will be spruced up with elements showcasing the area's past and present. Eight installations have been planned under the central part of the bridge.

"The 4-foot installations will represent the traditional, social, cultural and urban renewal aspects of the neighbourhood," said Vishwas Mote, ward officer of F-South Ward, under whose jurisdiction the plan is being implemented.

The BMC hopes that the beautification will complement the overall development that the area is witnessing. The city's first cluster redevelopment project is under way in the area.

Avighna Group, the builders handling this project, will also execute and pay for the makeover plan. "Our responsibility for the area extends beyond our estate and the makeover will not only be our contribution to the community, but also serve as a reminder to local residents

Matunga success story

In June last year, Mumbai's first under-the-bridge garden was opened in Matunga. The garden, under Tulpule flyover on Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Road, has a walking track and a staking area for children, drawing hundreds of residents who also play badminton there. The makeover was the brainchild of local residents who wanted to protect the stretch from being encroached by gamblers and drug addicts. The BMC now plans to have 24 such under-the-flyover gardens.

to maintain their surroundings," said Nishant Agarwal, managing director of Avighna Group.

The company will maintain the spaces for a period of three years. A leading design studio is already working on the art installations and BMC officials expect the beautification to be completed in 45 days.

Lakhs of people gather in Lalbaug and nearby localities during the Ganpati festival. The planned art installations will be designed in such a way that they can be removed during the festival and reassembled later.

"Just as the space under the Matunga flyover has become a magnet for the locals after its makeover last year, the transformation of segments under the Lalbaug bridge will add a lot of value to the area, lifting its image," Currey Road resident Alka Shinde, who moved into an apartment tower for rehabilitated residents from a chawl tenement four years ago.

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