

# Is Mumbai shrinking? Civic body believes so

## Land Experts Dispute DP Prelim Study

Linah Baliga | TNN

The boundaries of Greater Mumbai as defined by the BMC's preparatory study for Development Plan (DP) 2014-34 do not include over 24 sq km, or 6,000 acres, of land belong to the region, experts say. The study records 458.28 sq km in the existing land use (ELU) map instead of the previously acknowledged 482.74 sq km, they say. Urban planners and architects are concerned about the missing area and say the BMC's omission would leave the land vulnerable to exploitation.

"We want that the area of Mumbai should be comprehensive and all inclusive. Over the years, new lands have been created by land filling and siltation in the creeks. These additional lands have to be included into the area calculation of Mumbai," said architect PK Das.

A mapping of Mumbai's eco-sensitive areas and open spaces was conducted by PK Das & Associates and Mumbai Waterfronts Centre in 2012. According to it, the total area of Mumbai is 482.74 sq km.

"The state government had asked the BMC's Development Plan department to reconcile our figures with that of Group SCE (consultants who conducted the BMC's DP study) a year ago. An exercise was jointly carried out and Mumbai's area was acknowledged as 482.74 sq km. Yet the BMC continues to publish it as 458.28 sq km... All rivers, creeks, salt pans and mangroves must be mapped," Das said.

Environmentalist Debi Goenka, executive trustee, Conservation Action Trust, explained that the BMC boundaries were last drawn in the 1960s. No legislation has been passed since then to extend the boundary. The BMC's figure of 458.28 sq km dates from a 1968 revenue map issued by the state government.

Das said siltation occurs in creeks because of which mangroves and mudflats expand. But a civic official said, "Land formation is because of silt deposits but we cannot include those areas. According to revenue records, mangroves and wetlands are separately marked as water bodies."

## LAND USE PROFILE

Area in sq km



PK DAS & ASSOCIATES		BMC	
Category	Area	Category	Area
Railway property	9.41	Residential	104.2
Airports, defence, ports	14.55	Commercial	9
Major roads & highways	30	Offices	3.65
Gardens & parks	2.49	Industrial	22.4
Playgrounds	4.01	Education amenities	8.4
Recreation grounds	7.18	Medical amenities	3.2
Encroached Open Space	5.30	Social amenities	3.55
Encroached space on No development Zone	4.80	Public utilities	7.06
Fish drying yards	0.16	Transport & communication facilities	52.96
Lakes, ponds & tanks	7.06	Urban villages	3.3
Creeks, rivers and nallahs	13.14	Primary activity (fish drying, dairies, dhobi ghats)	15.6
Wetlands (salt pans)	8.01	Unclassified	18.57
Mangroves	61.42	Natural areas & open spaces	128.32
Beaches	1.44	Vacant land	33.73
Promenades	0.12	Special planning area like BKC & Dharavi	43.22
Hills, forests & National Park	53.6		
NDZ (excluding hills, mangroves, wetlands)	39.5		
Development area*	220.55		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>482.74</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>458.28</b>

\*For housing, industries, commerce, services

**DIFFERENCE 24.46** Experts say that if the land is not officially included in Greater Mumbai, it will be devoured by land sharks



BMC boundaries were last drawn in 1960 and after that no legislation has been passed to extend them. The boundaries have changed. For example, in Thane creek, there has been heavy siltation. Thirty years ago, the depth of the creek was 20 feet. Today, the water body has shrunk and mangroves and mudflats have expanded

**Debi Goenka** | EXECUTIVE TRUSTEE, CONSERVATION ACTION TRUST

The extra land experts are talking about has been taken from satellite images, which cannot be included officially. Much of this land is covered with mangroves, which surface during low tide. Mangrove cover keeps increasing or decreasing. It doesn't mean a change for the area of the metropolis — **A civic official**