

VERSOVA BEACH MAKEOVER GETS MUMBAI A NEW BEACH

By Chaitanya Marpakwar, Mumbai Mirror | May 24, 2016, 04:27 AM IST



Tiff between 2 legislators over Versova beautification makes MTDC split beach into two, forming Andheri (west) beach.

A race between two BJP legislators to beautify Versova beach has resulted in the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) dividing the beach into two and christening a 2.3km-long stretch as the Andheri (west) beach - making it the newest beach in the city.

This move came following demands by BJP legislators Ameet Satam from Andheri (West) and Bharti Lavekar from Versova to develop the sea front into a tourist hub.



A boardwalk and water sports facilities are all in the pipeline for Versova beach

Satam, in November 2014, had launched a massive drive to clean up the beach. The drive included the demolition of over 100 shanties involving close to 200 officials from various departments led by Satam.

"Both the legislators wanted to develop the beach. So we decided to split the beach and now a portion towards the south is called Andheri (West) beach and the remaining portion is the Versova beach," an MTDC official said.

Last year, the state government had cleared a plan for the beautification of what is now called the Andheri (West) beach.

"The plan envisions a seafront that offers water sports, an eatery and a marina. We are also planning to have the city's first beach board walk along the shore that will link Andheri and Juhu beaches. This will be the best beach in the city," Satam said.

The tourism agency has already invited proposals for turning this beachfront into a new tourist destination offering water sports facilities. MTDC has already appointed noted architect PK Das as a consultant to oversee the transformation of Andheri (West) beach. Besides water sports facilities, the plan also features a floating jetty, and security watch towers that will be manned by the coastal police.

"There was some confusion about Versova beach due to the boundary of the constituency. It has been sorted out by the MTDC. I had organised a meeting with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to discuss various issues facing Versova. The beach revamp was one of them. Plans to beautify Versova beach have also been finalised and will be sent for approvals soon," Lavekar said. She added that Lokhandwala Lake will also be taken up for renovation by the MTDC.

Paraag Jaain Nainuttia, Managing Director, MTDC, said, "Plans for the Andheri (West) beach were cleared by the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority (MCZMA). An Expression of Interest (EoI) was floated only after getting all approvals. Locals too have been consulted. All NOCs and permissions are in place. And the water sport facilities will be ready for use by the end of the year."

Satam said the plan to build the boardwalk would take off soon. "We are waiting for some technical permission. Once we get them, work on the boardwalk will also start. It will be the first of its kind in the country and will link the Juhu and Versova beaches," he added.

Residents said that regardless of the name, the beach should be beautified. "The beach revamp project that took off last year has gone well so far. The shanties have been removed and we can walk on the beach now. The project must be fast-tracked before new encroachments come up," said local resident Manoj Dedhia.

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