

MMRDA to pump Rs 120 cr into Bandra-Worli Sea Link

Ashish Kumar Mishra
MUMBAI

THE Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) is expected to invest Rs 120 crore into the much anticipated Bandra-Worli Sea Link project. MMRDA is evaluating a proposal from the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), the project implementation authority, for a loan to complete the project. According to estimates cited by the Maharashtra government, the cost of the project has been pegged at Rs 1,104 crore.

The entities are in initial level of talks and a formal agreement is yet to be signed. Says Dr Chandrashekhar, metropolitan commissioner, MMRDA, "MSRDC has approached us for a loan to fund the Bandra-Worli Sea link project and we are looking into that matter." According to sources, MSRDC has been asked to prepare a draft agreement on the proposal, following which it will be presented before the MMRDA committee of which CM Vilasrao Deshmukh is the chairman.

The need for support has arisen because of the poor financial

condition of MSRDC. Earlier, for the same project, MSRDC had taken a loan from MMRDA to the tune of Rs 75 crore. The Bandra-Worli project seemingly has run into trouble, on the funding front, because of the delays involved in the execution stage. The initial cost was Rs 650 crore, but due to objections raised by the local fishermen, the design and alignment of the bridge had to be changed, which has led to delays and price escalation.

At present, Hindustan Construction Company has been entrusted with building the project. This involves construction of eight-lane, approximately 4-km-long concrete segmental bridge in open sea between Bandra and Worli sea face. The eight-lane flyover will have capacity of carrying about 1.40 lakh cars per day.

Today, Mahim causeway is the only link connecting western suburbs to the island city of Mumbai. The existing north-south western corridor is highly congested and during the peak hours results in a bottleneck at Mahim Causeway. Vehicular traffic measuring about 1,20,000 PCU travels on the Mahim causeway every day and during peak hours it takes about forty minutes to travel from Mahim causeway to Worli, a distance of just about 8 km.

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Yen may add to Metro muscle

Japanese bank may fund a critical portion of the Metro Rail

Smriti Deshmukh

The Japanese may turn out to be one of the biggest investors in the city's ongoing infrastructure projects. After a series of meetings with state officials on Thursday, the Japanese Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) is considering to fund a critical part of the Metro Rail project.

Incidentally, the state's decision to reach out to the bank is significant, considering it had decided against seeking funds from the World Bank, which had laid down some stringent rehabilitation policies.

The JBIC will soon undertake a pilot study to assess the infrastructure projects while the

state continues to promote public-private partnership to boost development.

Post-talks, officials with the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) said that the state may turn to JBIC for the high viability gap funding (VGF) required for the third Metro Rail corridor between Mahim and Colaba. (VGF is the difference between the estimated project cost and the actual bid cost).

"The third corridor is very capital intensive since most of the rail will run underground — it will need funds to the tune of Rs10,000 crore — and it would require a high VGF, which can come from JBIC," said PRK Murthy, chief of the transport and communication division of the MMRDA.

The added rail link on the bridge linking Sewree and Nhava — a part of the Rs4,000 crore Mumbai Trans Harbour Link — may

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—PRK Murthy,
Chief, Transport & communication, MMRDA

also get JBIC funding, said an MMRDA official. "The rail link has been part of the Mumbai Metro Master Plan (MMRP), which talks about the metro connectivity from the mainland to the hinterland," said another official.

The Japanese pilot project will start as soon as the state sends an official signal. An MMRDA official said that it would take at least one



year to procure the loan. "The JBIC procedures are equally tough," he said. "But the bank has been supportive about the problems associated with rehabilitating project affected people (PAPs). JBIC, which will also be funding the Mumbai-Delhi freight rail corridor, has been studying our rehabilitation policies," added another official.

Dollar fluctuation alters MUTP plans

A \$542 million World Bank loan converted to Rs 2,617.86 crore in 2002; now, with a dip in dollar, it is worth Rs 2,151 crore — about Rs 500 cr less

SANDEEP SARKAR

THE fluctuation of the dollar has forced the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) to restructure the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) by excluding two vital components — the Station Area Traffic Improvement Scheme (SATIS) and the Road Over Bridges (ROB).

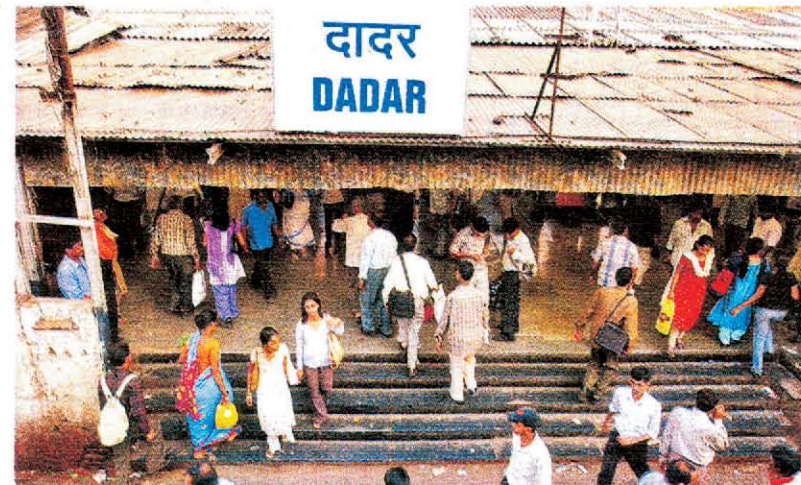
A senior official of MMRDA said that in November 2002, the World Bank had sanctioned \$542 million for MUTP, which amounted to Rs 2,617.86 crore. At that time, the price of one dollar was Rs 48.3; now it is Rs 39.7.

"The \$542 million now convert to Rs 2,151 crore, as a result of which MMRDA is at a loss of Rs 500 crore," the official explained.

The official added that the World Bank will not exceed its sanctioned amount, despite the heavy fluctuation of the dollar. So MMRDA has to use the sanctioned amount, even if it has to drop some projects.

"Since we have to execute all MUTP projects within the amount sanctioned by the World Bank and with the dollar nose-diving consistently, we have no option but to restructure MMRDA," said the official.

MMRDA sources say both SATIS and ROB will be now individual projects, even though a final call has yet to be taken. "For restructuring the loan, the Union government's nod has to be taken," sources say.



A view of the Dadar station where the Station Area Traffic Improvement Scheme (SATIS) has been proposed to improve the commuter and pedestrian movement. Due to fluctuations in the dollar, SATIS has been excluded from MUTP and will now be an individual project

SATIS was proposed to improve commuter and pedestrian movement and traffic circulation around six suburban stations — Ghatkopar, Andheri, Borivli, Dadar, Malad and Chembur. The estimated cost was Rs 73 crore. The project aims included building skywalks, foot over-bridges, and separate parking areas for auto-

rickshaws and taxis at Borivli, Dadar, Chembur and Ghatkopar. ROB has been proposed at Jogeshwari, Vikhroli and Kurla stations at a cost of around Rs 110 crore.

Sources say that MMRDA will not bear the cost of SATIS, and BMC says that they will share the cost with the Railways, as per the origi-

nal agreement. BMC will also take care of the resettlement and rehabilitation of those displaced.

With the project designs for SATIS finalised and the Railways giving its approval, MMRDA sources say that the main problem is removing hawkers surrounding the stations.

RS 2 LAKH CRORE: THE PRICE OF MAKING MUMBAI WORLD CLASS

Report by Canadian firm on World Bank's advice proposes three-pronged plan with the first horizon year set at 2016

Source: Mumbai Mirror

Mumbai as a World Class City

Vidyadhar Date

Gieve Patel, Mumbai-based painter, poet and medical doctor, has been conducting a poetry workshop for students of the elite Rishi Valley school, for the last ten years reading to them from Shakespeare, Dante and of late even love poetry. He narrated his experience during an interdisciplinary discussion on art at Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai recently in July.

One was struck by the contradiction that this involved.. Here was a poet from Mumbai going all the way to interior Andhra Pradesh talking with privileged kids in a campus spread over 300 acres. Curiously, a municipal school in Mumbai, very close to the municipal head office, does not have a separate toilet for girls and so many of them have simply stopped going to school.

At the same time malnutrition deaths were widely reported among children, of the few surviving adivasis in the green Aarey milk colony area in Mumbai this July. This area is now taken over by

builders for luxury residential buildings and a golf course after evicting adivasis. The so-called development is being carried out so callously, that seven workers were killed recently during an illegal construction of a luxury building, and the builder with powerful political connections went into hiding.

Such contradictions are going to sharpen in the coming days. And those with visions of Mumbai as a world class city and international financial centre (IFC) are not apologetic about it. Look at a statement by Mr. Percy Mistry, head of the high powered expert committee set up by the union finance ministry, on making Mumbai into such a centre. He wrote recently that by its very nature such a centre is elitist. He admitted that this was a politically incorrect statement in the India's ethos. (Business Standard 2-8-07).

Indeed some of the so-called world class cities are becoming extremely distorted and unequal.

London is now resembling more and more the deeply unequal city that Engels, the intellectual partner of Karl Marx, so powerfully depicted in the 1840s as the Guardian reported recently. Engels's writing on urban development of the period remains a classic and is acknowledged by experts of different political persuasions, though in India it is not so widely acknowledged.

A recent report by the Joseph Rountree Foundation on social segregation in Britain, highlights nature of cities which are designed to conceal, from the eyes of the wealthy the human cost of their riches.

The trouble is even London is finding it tough, to remain competitive in the new economy. And can there be a more prominent name among world class cities, and international financial centers than London ? All the catchwords of our elite like foreign partnership and privatization are not making enough sense in these countries. There are

important lessons here for Mumbai.

Heathrow airport, the busiest in the world, is now universally coming under attack from all sections for its poor service. It is failing to deliver though it is not only privatized but is being ruined by a foreign group, a Spanish construction company Ferrovial. Britain's economic secretary to the treasury recently said the airport is discouraging business executives from travelling to UK.

Investment in the airport has dropped even as revenue has soared in the first year under foreign ownership. Thousands of people are protesting against the expansion of the airport for environmental reasons and the management of the airport is resorting to extremely undemocratic means to prevent them from holding the protests outside the airport. Unlike in Mumbai where the opposition to such projects comes mainly from the poor who are the main victims, the protesters in the West are extremely organised, educated,

committed and determined. Injunctions against their protests have drawn strong condemnation from all quarters. The authorities must have taken leave of their senses, observed the Liberal Democratic party spokesperson.

Heathrow induces the same amount of stress and hypertension as being mugged or having a heart attack, the Times of London observed (5-8-07). Things are that bad. In Shanghai there are frequent flight delays for no apparent reason with constant expression of 'terrible regret', on the public address system. And the technological marvel of the superfast train between Shanghai and the airport is hideously expensive to maintain and unaffordable for most people. The lesson from this for a poor country like India is that becoming internationally competitive is an extremely expensive business, and sustaining the pace is even more challenging. Airports and highways are important. But can we afford to expand capacity for costly infrastructure like airports and expressways while ignoring people's basic needs.

Having created massive infrastructure for elite projects, Western countries are now finding it difficult to maintain it. This is spectacularly clear from the collapse of the Minneapolis bridge plunging rush hour traffic into the Mississippi river 60 ft. below recently, and the breach of the levees in New Orleans which has devastated the Black population of the glamour city. The nation's physical infrastructure is crumbling beneath us, the New York Times observed recently.

In the West there is now increasing revulsion against air travel as it is very damaging to the environment, but in India our civil aviation minister Praful Patel wants to take it to the masses and has promised to grant licences for running air services for the asking. Airport expansion projects have internationally run into opposition for environmental reasons. In Mumbai, the expansion involves removal of thousands of slum dwellers around the airport, because they are on the flight

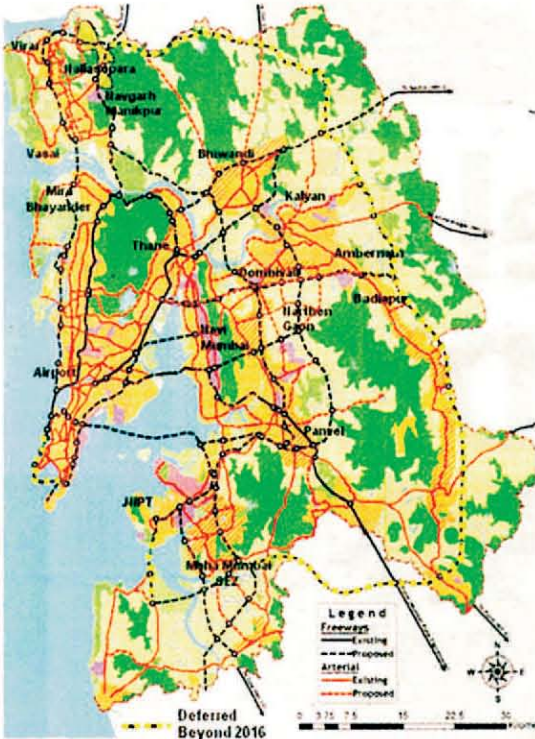


Recommended transport network (transit and highway) for horizon year 2016

path of arriving flights and so are considered an eyesore. The land may not be actually needed for expansion as another airport is planned in Navi Mumbai, but it is being eyed because it will bring a financial bonanza. As in London a private operator has been brought in for the expansion setting aside the original public sector management.

In London the key pillars of privatization in transport have collapsed promoting bail-outs by the government. Privatization of British Rail has proved so disastrous, it has provoked the prominent playwright David Hare to write a play The Permanent Way which proved to be quite a success.

Several world class cities and their Mayors are giving high priority to public transport, unlike in Mumbai, where the private motor car is being pampered at the expense of basic amenities for



common people. New York's Mayor media Moghul Michael Bloomberg is considered public transportation's loudest cheerleader. He boasts that he takes the subway train virtually everyday to his office and encourages New Yorkers to follow his environment friendly example. (International Herald Tribune 2-8-07). But his commuting is not the average straphanger's ride. There is criticism that he covers part of the journey with king-size Chevorlet, and he zips his card at the entrance of trains stations and waits on the platform like other commuters.

London's socialist Mayor Ken Livingstone is famous for his congestion tax on cars entering Central London. He had a big row with the American diplomatic staff in London who refused to pay the surcharge claiming diplomatic immunity. In Paris the scheme of providing some 10,000 self-service bicycles on a nominal charge

has proved immensely popular since its introduction in July. The pedaling army is seen to be taming the city's fierce car traffic. Livingstone has now asked the organization London Transport to develop a similar plan for London.

The bicycle is not seen to be inconsistent with Berlin's place in the forefront, of modern architecture, with some striking new buidings, the glass domed Reichstag and the annexe to German Parliament. Cycling is considered to be the best way to see Berlin. In Mumbai there is a sad lack of innovative ideas in transport. The traffic police, the car lobby are hostile to the bicycle and even the environmentalists are timid, they think it is risky to ride a bicycle. They forget that unless there is resistance on the issue things will never improve.

The Left, far from coming out with any innovative ideas on transport, is more friendly to the car lobby than other political parties as is seen in Kolkata. The West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjea is encouraging more and more expensive multi-storied or underground car parks which seemed to be heading for financial disaster like the multi-storied car park at Nariman Point in Mumbai, as people prefer to usurp free parking space on the roadside. The pedestrian plaza at New Market in Kolkata has been taken over by local toughs who are using it for unauthorized two-wheeler parking. Mumbai is less brazen in this respect.

Mumbai's municipality owned bus transport system is much better than Delhi's privatized bus transport whose cut-throat competition and reckless speed have taken the toll of several lives this year. But the BEST Undertaking needs to supplement its efforts by providing bus shelters, and decent seating spaces for commuters at bus stops as in Pune. It is also high time the BEST gives up the ruinous idea of selling the space in bus depots to big builders. Any city wanting to encourage public transport would acquire more

spaces, not give away its own land.

But decision makers in Mumbai have at last started realizing that it is necessary to curb the car culture. Mr T Chandrashekhar, till recently the commissioner for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, sprang quite a surprise recently by coming out openly against the small car project of the Tatas. He said he would file a public interest litigation if the cars clogged the street of the city. That was really something coming from someone who had launched a tirade against environmentalists till recently.

We certainly deserve a better environment minister than Mr. Ganesh Naik, who has followed up his notorious talk of selling open spaces of Mumbai with the idea of constructing an island in the sea near Mumbai for commercial exploitation, unaware of the consequences of such a reclamation, that is the erosion of sea beach elsewhere. The beach at Dadar chowpatty has already disappeared because of this causing nostalgia and anguish to the local residents.

Politicians also need to know their city better. Mumbai's new woman Mayor Shubha Raul admitted recently that she would not have known the existence of a colony of flamingoes in the mudflats, near the Sewree railway station, and oil refineries in Mumbai had it not been for a trip organised by a non-government organization.

On hearing of complaints of water pollution in the area, she said she wanted the municipal corporation to analyse the water but was told that the machinery was supposed to do analysis of only drinking water. That makes it obvious that the civic body must give up its bureaucratic approach and become more pro-active.

This writer wrote in the year 2005 about charge leveled by builder Niranjan Hiranandani that one has to pay a bribe of Rs. 140 per sq. ft. to the civic staff. I received a letter from the anti-corruption

Mumbai is out of top 10 Indian business cities



Commercial failure?

World Bank report judged cities on regulatory indices relating to time and cost expended to run businesses

Among Indian cities, Hyderabad scored highly for hassle-free property registration

Jaipur was best city to start a business in

Trading across borders was easiest in Chennai

Bhubaneswar had the most convenient licensing system

Mumbai figured nowhere

Biz-friendly rankings

- 1 Hyderabad
- 2 Bangalore
- 3 Jaipur
- 4 Bhubaneswar
- 5 Chandigarh
- 6 Chennai
- 7 Lucknow
- 8 New Delhi
- 9 Patna
- 10 Ranchi
- 11 Mumbai
- 12 Kolkata

City fails on most of the crucial indicators

Ganesh Kanate & Prashant Hamine.
Mumbai

A report analysing South Asia's most business-friendly destinations has diminished the case Mumbai makes for itself as India's commercial capital.

'Doing Business in South Asia 2007' - a report published by the International Finance Corporation, a World Bank entity - characterises Mumbai as the second-worst city in the region for operating businesses.

India, however, has emerged as the top reformer in South Asia, an endorsement of the country's success in implementing regulations that are conducive to business.

Hyderabad takes top position as the entrepreneurial hotspot among Indian cities, while Kolkata is slotted at the bottom.

The study, also known as the World Competitiveness Report, was released last month. Devendra Fadnavis, BJP legislator, produced the report in the assembly while participating in a debate on the state budget.

Fadnavis pointed out that the state's industrial growth rate has gone down from last year's 9 per cent to 7.9 per cent, and its exports have slid by Rs80,000 crore.

'Future will be better'

State Finance Minister Jayant Patil said that even though the state has got negative rating for governance, it does not mean the situation cannot be salvaged.

Maharashtra continues to attract maximum FDI and industrial growth continues to rise. "Mumbai needs investment in infrastructure, for which we are getting central assistance," he said. "Things are bound to improve in the near future."

Mumbai leads in pushing urban renewal projects

Satyajit Joshi
Pune, December 15

THE BRIHANMUMBAI Municipal Corporation (BMC) has beat other cities' civic bodies in implementing projects under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) scheme, according to a review.

The state's Management Information System (MIS) - a computerised system of re-

viewing implementation of projects - has revealed that the BMC has received Rs 2,200 crore under the renewal programme.

Sources in the Urban Development Department (UDD) told HT on condition of anonymity that the system monitors JNNURM projects to ensure that the entire fund is spent for the reason specified and within the stipulated deadlines.

According to the review, which began in August, Mumbai beats seven cities in the state with 100 per cent points followed by Nagpur with 89 per cent points. Pune scored a low 37 per cent. Pimpri-Chinchwad, the industrial township near Pune, came in third.

UDD Principal Secretary T.C. Benjamin said the MIS was introduced to keep a tab on the time factor as delays in implementation would mean escalating project costs. Mumbai will now receive Rs 2,200 crore followed.

Maharashtra, which has been allotted Rs 6,300 crore for seven civic corporations, has 47 projects, which will be implemented with financial assistance from the Centre.

Sources in the UDD and the Pune Municipal Corporation said that Pune had been lagging behind as project tenders had not been sanctioned in the time given.

Benjamin said he had written to the Pune civic body that the government would intervene if the progress of JNNURM projects was not satisfactory. "We have the option to involve any other government agency."

Sources said that the letter was an indication that if JNNURM projects in the seven civic bodies were not implemented by the respective corporations as per criteria, the government would employ some other government agency to do the job.

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bureau of the state government in July this year to present myself to give evidence on the subject. But that apart the first citizen, the Mayor deserves more respect from the upper class which has been wanting to have its own corporate friendly Mayor. When the Mayor Dr Raul visited the sprawling race course recently, none from the Turf Club members came to receive her, probably because she opposed commercial use of the race course land, which runs into several acres and which is given by the government at a nominal lease rent.

There is a constant hue and cry over the urban land ceiling Act but few raise their voice against huge rent subsidies given on vast tracts of land to corporate houses and clubs. Clearly there is a case for a big upward revision in rents of land whose lease, which in some cases has run for a hundred years, comes to an end soon. Figures obtained by activist Shailesh Gandhi under the Right to Information Act make an astounding reading.

The quality of life in Mumbai is abysmally low for the common people despite the talk of a world class city. Some people do have a lot to smile and laugh. The laughter that one hears at the Laughter Club outside the upper class Joggers Park in Bandra is the laughter of big money. Members regularly go in big groups on pleasure trips to Goa and Kerala. Announcements of such trips are regularly made at the morning sessions, and no one raises an eye brow when it is mentioned that a hotel room would cost Rs 5000 a day.

While open spaces are being taken over by big builders, several like public parks

are being privatized with entry fees for admission which the poor cannot afford. Some of these spaces frequented by the rich are being eyed by the corporate sector for sales promotion. In the last few months I have seen Reebok promoting its shoes in the seaside Joggers Park in Bandra with physical instructors telling people how to walk and run and enjoy it. And, an American company went on a sales campaign in the area to sell its water cooler like machines, which convert humidity in the air into water. In America water bottling companies, are coming under severe attack for making huge profits out of water which is no different from tap water. The profits are a thousand times of the cost. Now through these costly machines rich city dwellers will be able to harvest literally from the air though at a huge cost, both in terms of the price of the machine and the energy required to run it. In the worrying times of climate change and feared water shortage, the rich will be able to take care of themselves. The poor will be left gasping for fresh air and water.

The municipal corporation is giving a false impression that it does have enough funds to maintain and develop public spaces, parks this is refuted by former municipal commissioners like Sharad Kale and D.M. Sukthankar. It is a rich body, has enough funds and it cannot shirk its responsibility of creating more open and green spaces in the city. One reason Singapore has become attractive to investors and has scored over Hong Kong is that it has hugely increased its green cover. Mumbai's leadership whether political or corporate needs to become far more pro-active on this issue than it has been. And the green spaces must be real public spaces, accessible to

City of Choice

Mini Chandran Kurian
on the divide between
'a city to live in' and 'a
city to work in'

Essentially, the cities of India are windows through which a canvas of the Indian ethos and living cultural patterns is viewed. And yet, each canvas is individualistic and separate, marked with people and events, of the history that shapes it and the opportunities that determine its future.

To the young earnest students of business management, who must decide on which way the path ahead must fork, it is a crucial decision to make. Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kochi...? And the question looms large on tier II cities like Pune, Gurgaon, Nagpur, Faridabad, Chandigarh.

While campus placements largely determine the immediate future, a great deal of thought is expended on weighing the qualitative differences between cities. Parameters like work opportunities, infrastructure, healthcare facilities, housing, safety, social environment, even entertainment potential are given due consideration. The broadest divide emerges between 'a city to live in' and 'a city to work in'.

As Uday Mishra, a management graduate in marketing, who is currently working with a financial consultancy firm, puts it, "Nearly 60 per cent of business school graduates are looking at the growth opportunities a city provides, while 40 per cent today are looking at the lifestyle angle. Even young people realise that while a city like Mumbai would always rank first where business opportunity is concerned, it may not provide the quality of

life you hanker after. Besides, there is a certain indifference prevalent here, that comes as a culture shock to someone who has lived elsewhere; like I am originally from Jamshedpur, which has a very relaxed, club culture. But let me say that you can't beat Mumbai for professionalism!" Perhaps one of things that distinguishes a city is its pace. For a newcomer to Mumbai like Alok Chaube, who completed his management in Chandigarh, the pace of Mumbai has been difficult to

handle. "As a student, I had this glamorous image of Mumbai in mind, I felt that this would be the best place for my career. And yes, it does not disappoint in that sense. But the infrastructure is appalling. The distances are killing. When I

think of Chandigarh's beauty and the quality of life there, I am disillusioned by this city. But as a management professional, I have to admit that Mumbai or Delhi is the place for me."

Comments Kirti John, who took an MBA degree from NMIMS, Mumbai, and is currently, manager-ICICI Bank. "Two years into the job, and you are taking stock of the situation. While management graduates are often paid higher salaries in Mumbai, the flip side is that the cost of living is much higher here. But what I like best about Mumbai is that the emphasis is not on who you are, but on what you are doing. And you are treated as an individual performer, there is no gender bias. When it comes

And if you are in information technology, then that's the city for you. Bangalore is a clean place with smaller pre-occupations."

George Kuriakose, who did his management at the Amrita School of Business in Coimbatore, and currently manages the family business in Kerala, Chennai and Mumbai, agrees. "What's nice about Bangalore is that while the infrastructure could be better, the social environment radiates old-fashioned warmth. But in all fairness, I'd say that Delhi tops in connectivity to other parts of India, and to the rest of the world. Mumbai comes a close second. Mumbai, however, tops in business opportunities, transport facilities (it has the best public transport system, be it the local trains, buses or auto-rickshaws that ply strictly by the meter), and safety for women. Again, there are hardly any power failures in Mumbai."

He adds, "What is interesting is that perceptions of Indian cities are changing across the spectrum. While Kolkata is perceived by many as the city that gives you a meaningful existence, it dips in the ratings when it comes to investing in it or making money. Again, Coimbatore which is an underrated place at the moment, is a great place to live in if you like a slower pace of life. The cost of living is quite low compared to other cities."

A recent survey by Indicus Analytics across 100 cities puts Gurgaon as the most preferred city to earn in, followed by Silvasa, Noida, Faridabad, Rupnagar, Chandigarh, Surat, then Bangalore. The best cities to live in feature Kochi at the top of the list followed by Kozhikode, Shimla, Thiruvananthapuram, Mysore etc; while the best cities to invest in include Silvasa, Coimbatore, Ludhiana, Noida and so on.

"The survey only points to what is going to be the trend in the future," opines Gehr Hingotani, BMS faculty -- H College, Mumbai. "The tier cities like Pune, Aurangabad, Ahmedabad, Kannur, et al are seeing increased industrial development, better infrastructure, better housing facilities, which means greater growth opportunities for management professionals. The emphasis is gradually shifting to the places, which are really tier cities of the future."

to safety, Mumbai tops the list without question. But you have to be a highly paid professional to survive here. In that sense, Bangalore is the best destination for someone setting out in life.

AISHWARYA K



the people freely. Merely having big green spaces in large gated communities of the rich would be of little use to the city.

Mumbai first needs to provide, basic amenities to its citizens before joining the chorus of making it a world class city. Mumbai should be seen in comparison with cities in Asia and Latin America rather than Europe and North America. It may sound uncharitable and harsh but it is a fact, that the chief ministers have also been responsible directly for this disaster. Most of the plots gifted away by the chief ministers were part of areas which were low lying, marshy with mangroves. All these plots were huge holding ponds and would hold water till it was dispersed. Was this the reason why planners chose not to make provision for huge open spaces in the suburbs? It now stands to reason that the chief ministers must be stripped of these powers to allot lands. Alternatively, any grant of such land must be cleared after a due notice given, objections sought and public hearing conducted. Present chief minister needs to enlighten himself on the crisis that Mumbai faced. The urban planning policies of Maharashtra Government, have been responsible for the dire strait the city finds itself in now. The chief minister refuses to learn lessons as is evident from his latest announcement saying that NDZ (No Development Zone) cannot permanently remain so. The builders lobby, after mill lands, is now eyeing the saltpan lands, and lands in no development zone. The chief minister seems to be in a mood to oblige them. No wonder chief minister has been compared to Emperor Nero who is leading the city to its doom.