

## FOLLOWING THE BAN ON HOARDINGS IN SOUTH MUMBAI, ACTIVISTS FROM THE SUBURBS SAY:



PHOTO: UTTAM CHANDRAN

**Ashutosh Shukla, Khar**

**T**HE DEBATE continues, only the battle-lines have shifted. Should advertising billboards and hoardings be removed from the western suburbs, too, or should they shine on since there are very few heritage buildings there?

Local social groups in the western suburbs are very clear—hoardings in the suburbs, too, must perish. In fact, many of them have charged the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) of discriminating against the suburbs while implementing its anti-hoardings policy.

Like-minded members of at least 10 local associations who had gathered at Khar last Sunday in a meeting chaired by 'Citizen's Corporation' Adil D'Souza voted to take up cudgels against hoardings. Pervod that the ban on hoardings and mobile

advertising vans was only limited to South Mumbai, the activists were planning to approach the civic body with a similar demand for the suburbs.

On the other side are those who believe that since the hoardings in the suburbs are not put up on heritage buildings, and since they earn maximum revenues for cooperative housing societies (which are otherwise running into losses), the billboards must remain.

The battle has spilled out on the streets, literally. Oversight, hoardings put up by the pro lobby have sprung up, defying hoardings.

The BMC had come up with a new policy on August 10, where in the display of advertisements by way of hoardings and mobile vans in wards A, B, C, D and E of South Mumbai was banned, primarily because of heritage buildings.

Speaking to HT Lives after the Sunday's meeting, D'Souza said,

"A majority of those who attended the meeting decided to call for the ban. We have to go by the majority wish. I will also approach the issue as an activist. The subject needs to be taken to its logical conclusion.

"The BMC has to decide between the interests of the public and the revenues earned at the cost of looking ugly."

The corporator said that they

Hoardings do not add aesthetic value. But in some cases, like on the Western Expressway, they give revenue to NGOs and not the BMC. In cases like this, billboards should stay.

JOE BARNETTO  
Social Activist, Vile Parle

would also ask the authorities to remove banners. "I am also against banners, particularly of political parties, where people have national flags with their party symbols," he added.

Another activist Anandini Thakur of Khar Residents Association told this correspondent, "We will approach the additional commissioner soon. This is a step-motherly treatment. We know that there are places that have no hoardings at all like Delhi."

But there are many who feel otherwise. Reacting to the new development, DK Bhandekar, Chairman, Mumbai Hoarding Owners Association, said, "I agree that the BMC is discriminatory in its approach. But the people who want the hoardings to be removed from the suburbs

are not applying their minds. There are many who earn a lot from putting up such hoardings.

For example, on Marine Drive, most of the flats are on a pagal system and not on ownership basis. If hoardings are put up on such buildings, housing societies can earn between Rs 30,000 and Rs 40,000. In fact, hoardings is the one way of generating revenue wherein the BMC does not even have to give any service in return and earn Rs 60 crores. The authorities, anyway, keeps seeking loans from international organisations. Also, hoardings have several livelihoods linked with the business. At present, there are 50,000 people dependent on this business of hoardings. We are transforming Mumbai into Shanghai. In Shanghai, there are 18,000 hoardings while in Man-

bai only 2,200 hoardings. Streets like Ginza in Japan are full of hoardings and neon signs."

But those like Anand Desai, Secretary, Juhu Citizen's Welfare Group (JCWG) who was also present at Sunday's meeting disagreed. "I do agree that it is an important source of income but greater concerns for the society should be looked at. Societies will come up with other ways to generate revenues."

When asked about the demand, Additional Municipal Commissioner R Rajeev said, "Let the residents give it in writing. We will accept that. Why are they getting frustrated? They can't ask questions like this. We have kept this thing very open and ask the public to give their suggestion and objections."

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**LIVES EXCLUSIVE**



PHOTO: SHUKLA

Pro and anti-hoarding lobbies have taken their battle to the streets

### TELL US

Do you want the hoardings in the suburbs to go? Email us your opinion on [htlives@indianexpress.com](mailto:htlives@indianexpress.com)

### Why the BMC has removed hoardings

- Because they spoil the skyline
- Hoardings are too cluttered and there needs to be some regulation
- To ensure that heritage structures are not defaced

### Why activists want them removed

- The BMC is discriminating against suburbs
- Hoardings give an untidy and littered look
- They don't serve any objectives
- They are mere distractions and do not possess aesthetic value

### Why others want hoardings to stay

- Hoardings are a source of income to the BMC
- Many housing societies recover monthly maintenance money from such earnings
- The earnings can be channelised to other productive activities

## SINGING UNSEEN LYRICS

Udaan is a 30-member band, 20 of whom are visually challenged

**Beryl Meneses, Vile Parle**

**Venue:** Narimbhai Thakkar Gujarat Mandir, Vile Parle  
**Event:** A musical evening comprising Marathi folk songs, popular Bollywood and Gujarati numbers, as also dance performances  
**Highlight:** Almost all the members of the troupe are blind. Also, a male singer who rendered songs in a woman's voice equally well.

**T**HIS is what audiences last Monday were treated to—a fine performance by the 30-member band Udaan, 20 of whom were visually challenged.

While the band went all out to impress chief guest Kishore Namit Kapoor whose acting school is famous for some renowned names in Bollywood, this is not their debut performance. Started two years ago by Kunal Haria, the band's producer, and over 90 shows old, Udaan has achieved much in a short period of time. "We were a group of schoolmates from Happy Home for the Blind, Worli, trained in musical instruments. Then Kunal called us together to form this band and it clicked, taking our individual talents to greater heights," says Kiran Viskar, the band's immensely talented flautist, who can improvise on almost any tone.



Udaan belted out some heart-rending numbers

PHASAC DORN

Teamwork, dedication and discipline is what has kept this band going right from its early days. Kunal, a BA in Philosophy, whose third attempt at forming a band finally succeeded in 2005, named the band Udaan, with the slogan 'aspire to acquire higher altitude'. This motto helped motivate him and director

Deepak Soni in going from one college to the other for publicity, holding auditions and the weekly jam sessions in their hired Vile Parle auditorium—a gift from ex-mayor of Mumbai, Dr Hamesh Prabhu, who also happens to have a disabled son. Udaan has performed in Lonavala, Nasik and Pune but their maximum number of performances like dandya events, sangeet functions, as well as concerts, are even comprising Western rock music have been in Mumbai. Their forte is filmi music as this ap-

### Cutting an album soon

Udaan is now planning to release a music album which will be a fusion of light rock and pop music, including their theme song and only original composition, Anandini Meir Bhatak Rhyth, Ujale Mein Aaye Alam. "The main focus, however, will be on the social message which can be seen through the lyrics and choice of songs," says Deepak Soni, Director.

There are also long-term plans of establishing a music academy with branches all over India to 'nurture and nourish talent of disabled as well as non-disabled people, thereby blending them together.'

The idea of forming the band was to spread awareness about the talent of visually impaired people so that it would generate employment avenues. While Deepak doubles up as a vocalist, Kunal, who learnt the flute, prefers the management and organisation aspects of the band. The band also has ten members who can see because, as Deepak says, "We need their help to join hands with us to banish blindness being looked upon as a disability."

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