

Residents want greenery not cement roads

People Of Aundh, Baner & Balewadi Fear That Groundwater Table Will Be Affected

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Pune: Baner and Balewadi have probably seen most road concreting works in the city in the last few years. What began with the main Baner Road in 2008, for Commonwealth Youth Games, continues till date.

Ten major roads in the area have been concreted including Baner to Cummings, Part Card Club to Highway, Mitoon, Euthica, Sanewadi (Sarja to Ambedkar statue) and Medipoint Hospital to Ganapati temple. Going beyond the plush look of the newly developing residential and commercial pockets in the area, many locals have vented the need to fast-track road concreting at the cost of groundwater depletion and declining tree cover. Increased height of roads also means the rain water will gush into housing societies.

CONCRETE MESS

Baner Road resident Anuradha Barpande said, "The rain water will not percolate through these roads. This will result in depletion of ground water table. The concrete roads have also increased over all heat in area. These items to be a general lack of initiative among the local politicians regarding communicating with the locals. It simply comes down to senselessly using up allocated funds."

Anil Mandrupkar, whose office is in Balewadi, believes that rapid concreting is affecting the area's ecological balance. "Water does not seep into the ground, so there is hardly any scope for plantation. Concrete roads also absorb more heat, thus adding to the temperature rise. The whole area has turned into a

NUMERICALLY SPEAKING

- > Cost of concrete road: ₹2,300-2,500/ square metre
- > Cost of bitumen road: ₹1,300/ square metre (To be done once in three years)
- > Cost of Ultra Thin White Topping (for concreting existing bitumen roads): ₹800/ square metre
- > Cost of relaying/repairing bitumen road: ₹400-500/ square metre
- > Road length concreted in Baner-Balewadi-Aundh: 80km
- > Time required for concreting: 6 months for 1 km road length (200 metres occupied at any given time)
- > Basic criterion for concreting a road: Total width < 18 metres



Ten major roads have been concreted here, which have completely transformed the entire area. Concrete roads will ensure there is no repeated digging as all utilities are placed on the sides. For construction of these roads, we are using water from the sewage treatment plant

Baburao Chandere | NCP CORPORATOR

No citizen groups or associations were consulted before starting the road work. The new roads absorb more heat and, as a result, the temperature in our area remains high even in the evening. In the name of concreting, the civic body has not only uprooted trees, but also blocked fresh water streams like Dev Nadi which cannot flow downstream anymore. We need a blue and green area—not a concrete one. The work is driven by contractors' interests

Anupam Saraph | A MEMBER OF AUNDH VIKAS MANDAL AND BANER AREA SABHA

OVERHAULING ROADS

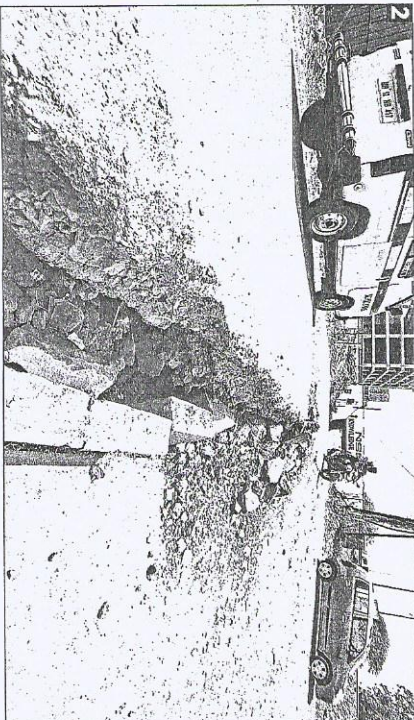
Road works have never been done in such a frenzy for years in the city. Over a 100 arterial roads, lanes and bylanes are being done over with cement concrete. Work is going on simultaneously on several roads in one area putting residents to severe inconvenience. Every commuter is at the receiving end of the dust, noise and traffic snarls when roads are blocked.

Do you think Pune needs concrete roads when asphaltting can suffice?

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1) Concreting work under way on Balewadi Road



2) Incomplete work on Pancard Club Road in Baner

transparency

Activists bat for

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Pune: Better coordination among civic departments and timely completion of projects will go a long way in reducing inconvenience caused to citizens, say activists.

Some have also questioned the sudden rush of work in the last quarter of every financial year. "The PMC takes up most works in January and tend to speed up by March-end to finish it any how before monsoon. The sudden, incessant digging of roads, usually done multiple times in a short span of time, is a sign of poor planning and complete apathy towards people's needs, activists say.

Ganesh Subhram, secretary of Negrati Chetna Manch, said, "The department should maintain a separate record in conjunction with other departments detailing the type of surfacing done on each road and the defect-liability period of the contractor. Till that time the road should not be tampered with at all."

"Corporators suddenly went up to bus stop and handed them want to look good for themselves and their party by showing a good report card of work done. That's why re-appropration of funds is hastily approved," Subhram added.

One contractor taking up multiple projects in different areas tends to slow down work everywhere, points out Vivek Valsankar, president of Shag Negrati Manch. "The biggest problem is the lack of coordination between different departments. Ideally, they should complete all paper work during the monsoon months so that the work can begin in October. Here too, information boards are a must at site of every road work.



POOR PLANNING?

These boards should provide details of the contractor and start and end date of the project. The civic body also needs a centralised monitoring cell to keep track of the ongoing works," Valsankar said.

"The work gets delayed only because of lack of funds" said Rajendra Raol, head of the civic roads department. "This year, we have got a two-month extension and we will be able to complete all the work," he said.

According to civic officials, several unofficial requests have been made to the state government to permanently change the financial year for the civic body. "We have appealed to permanently end the financial year in June rather than March as most work happens during this time. Road laying work cannot start till the drainage and water pipeline work is on, which usually gets pushed to February and March. We can continue to end the administrative work in March but this way at least the money wouldn't lapse," the official said on the condition of anonymity.

R11 activist Vija Kumhar calls a result of take-or-leave-it discipline. "A special external audit of the civic body's financial transactions is needed urgently," said Kumhar.

area. While I appreciate the fact that concrete roads will be us of frequently braking and pothole-filled bitumen roads, I am also concerned about the run off of rain water which will not be able to percolate into the ground."

Shravanik Shevate, junior engineer (roads) in the PMC, said, "Cost-wise, maintaining a bitumen road works out to be more expensive in the long run. Anyway, we are focusing only on the main roads of the area which are more than 1km wide. A provision has been made on road sides for storm water drains so that the rainwater percolates."