

## Pune: Sluggish Progress In Mula-Mutha River Bank Improvement Project Prompts Urgent Action



Pune, 31st August 2023: The expected pace of the river bank improvement project spanning Pune's Bundgarden to Mundhwa has hit a setback. While a 20 percent completion target was set for the end of August, a mere 12 percent of the work has been accomplished thus far. In light of this, Pune Municipal Commissioner Vikram Kumar has issued a directive to expedite the project's progress, going so far as to invoke measures to spur the concerned contractor into action.

The ambitious River Revival Project aims to enhance the aesthetics of the Mula-Mutha river banks. The ongoing efforts encompass the beautification of two stretches: Sangamwadi to Bundgarden, spanning 3.7 kilometers, and Bundgarden to Mundhwa, stretching 5.3 kilometers.

Financially, this endeavor commands a budget of Rs 265 crores for the former stretch and Rs 604 crores for the latter. To provide citizens with a tangible preview of the project's eventual outcome, the municipal corporation has prioritized the completion of 300 meters at Bundgarden.

In a recent assembly, Commissioner Vikram Kumar convened municipal officials and contractors to assess the project's trajectory. While the Sangamwadi to Bundgarden phase was projected to be 32 percent complete, it has only reached the 30 percent mark. More alarmingly, the Bundgarden to Mundhwa section lags significantly behind, achieving a mere 12 percent of the projected 20 percent completion.

During the meeting, it was highlighted that approximately 400 workers and laborers are engaged daily for the Sangamwadi to Bundagarden segment, whereas a meager 130 are allocated to the Bundagarden to Mundhwa section. Expressing his dissatisfaction, the Commissioner has mandated a swift escalation of efforts, emphasizing an augmentation of the workforce, as conveyed by Additional Commissioner Dr. Kunal Khemnar.

In a significant legislative shift, the state government has opted to amend the Tree Authority Act, thereby transferring the authority to authorize tree felling from the government to the Municipal Corporation. In consideration of the trees that will be sacrificed for the river bank improvement initiative, the Municipal Corporation had previously petitioned the Maharashtra State Tree Authority for requisite permissions.

However, with the legislative revision, these prerogatives have now reverted to the Municipal Corporation. In alignment with this new legal framework, Commissioner Vikram Kumar is slated to make pertinent decisions in accordance with the Act's provisions in the forthcoming week. The impending endeavor, necessitating the removal of around seven thousand trees, will be offset by a comprehensive reforestation initiative encompassing the planting of approximately 60 to 65 thousand trees, disclosed Khemnar.

Today, the Municipal Commissioner conducted an exhaustive review of the river bank improvement project. Notably, the progress on the Bundagarden to Mundhwa phase has been sluggish, prompting a decisive intervention. As a result, the contractor has been instructed to escalate the pace by enlisting a larger workforce. Furthermore, a tender has been initiated for the third phase of the river improvement scheme, covering an eight-kilometer span from Baner to Wakad; however, this phase's timeline has been extended, according to Dr. Kunal Khemnar, Additional Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation.