

PRESS RELEASE

Matheran beautification work in progress; More than 50% of work achieved

Mumbai

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority(MMRDA) is expeditiously undertaking Matheran beautification work at four view points namely-- Panorama Point, Heart Point, Miyra Point & Echo Point along with improvement of Dasturi - Matheran Pathway and existing parking area for tourists. The work in progress at the Matheran beautification initiative was thoroughly inspected by Shri. R.A. Rajeev (Metropolitan Commissioner, MMRDA) along with top officials from MMRDA who made a visit to the project site and ensured timely completion. The Metropolitan Commissioner also shared a few suggestions on-site to ultimately enhance the overall experience of the visitors that can eventually help improve tourism at this beautiful hill-station. Since Matheran is an eco-sensitive zone it is taking into account all environmental concerns and suggestions given by the Matheran Monitoring Committee (MMC) formed in 2017, while undertaking the beautification work.

As of now, 70 per cent of work completed under the improvement and beautification of four view points. This work was started in April 2018. Similarly, 35 per cent of work of Dasturi - Matheran Pathway beautification has been attained and 90 per cent of work completed of existing vehicle parking improvement at Dasturi. Both the work at Dasturi commenced in September 2019.

In Matheran no vehicles are allowed except ambulance & fire engine's beyond Dasturi naka following the restrictions due to the eco-sensitive zone. Existing pathways (admeasuring length 5.60 km) beyond Dasturi naka are of kutcha nature causing dust nuisances requiring regular maintenance, resulting in difficulty in walking and also to pull carts carrying goods, therefore to overcome these problems the MMRDA had proposed improvement/upgradation of existing pathway with street lights and other facilities keeping in view Matheran Monitoring Committee requirement on water percolation, prevention of soil erosion and use of eco-friendly material etc. Moreover, while undertaking all these works, area within existing Right-of-Way (ROW) so to eliminate acquisition of additional forest land was also taken care of.

In fact, before approval of MMC two trial mockup pathways were made by Matheran Municipal Council using eco friendly material. One in Lateritic stone & other in Lateritic clay blocks. After 2-3 years of observation, it was found that lateritic clay block was intact with little abrasion while the lateritic stone was having undulations and weathering, due to which it was difficult for users including animals to walk.

The same was shown to MMC and Council. Wherein the MMC had given approval for lateritic clay block for construction of pathways. However, for this lateritic clay blocks there was no specifications in Indian Standard (IS) or in European Standard. Since the quantity of the clay blocks to be used for Pathway work was huge and to have required strength considering

galloping impact of horses, cart puller, it was necessary to have proper quality specifications. Considering all these aspects and only after conducting detailed R&D at lateritic source Chiplun factory and in lab, the MMRDA drafted the specification for the eco friendly material-- lateritic clay blocks by obtaining all requisite approvals from IIT Mumbai.

As per the standard approved specifications lateritic clay blocks will have M-40 concrete paver block strength, made with only lateritic soil, pulverizing, vacuumised extrusion & backing more than 900 to 1000 degree celsius and no other additives used. Interestingly, the Matheran Municipal Council is also using the same lateritic clay paver block for internal roads in Matheran.

To ensure localized water percolation and control soil erosion, foundation of said pathway is proposed in granular sub base and wet mix macadam comprising of stone metal. Erection/placing of gabion wall with PVC coated wire mesh abutting pathway to restrain soil erosion.

Besides this, street lighting and road furniture such as sign boards, sitting benches, horse mounting stand, dustbins, lamp posts, railing for safety as per the guidelines of MMC and the manual approved by Matheran Heritage Committee will be installed. These all facilities will ensure least inconvenience to pathway & view points users as well as reduce any harm to environment.

The improvement of existing car parking near Dasturi entrance (Vehicular entry is allowed up to this location) with cement concrete paver block, required storm water drainage arrangement and chain link fencing will facilitate disciplined parking arrangement for tourists.

R A Rajeev, Metropolitan Commissioner MMRDA said: "I visited Matheran and took stock of all ongoing beautification and other development activities from the team of officials. Utmost care has been taken into account due to the existing environmental constraints here. Once all these pathway beautification work is completed, I am sure that tourists will be able to enjoy the scenic beauty of Matheran with much more comfort."

(Dr. B.G. Pawar)

Jt. Metropolitan Commissioner