

Uprooting of over 3,000 trees for swimming pool in Mumbai's Mira Road halted

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MUMBAI: After issuing a notice to uproot over 3,000 trees to make way for an Olympic-size swimming pool in Mira Road, the Mira Bhayander Municipal Corporation (MBMC) on Sunday decided to look for another location to construct the pool.

MBMC had issued a public notice on October 23 regarding transplanting 3,267 trees on a reserved plot in Ramdev Park in Mira Road for a swimming pool and gymnasium. It was part of the civic body's plans to have four big size swimming pools in the region.

Public had time till Monday to raise objections. The MBMC on Sunday via a tweet informed that several objections from NGOs, environmental and social activists and general public was received against the uprooting of the trees that were planted over two years ago to create a Japanese-style Zen garden.

The civic body will now look for another location. Activists have already expressed concerns about providing water for the swimming pools in a region that faces severe water crunch. Also activists worried that more trees will be uprooted for constructing four pools. The garden department of the Mira Bhayander Municipal Corporation (MBMC) issued the public notice calling for the uprooting and transplanting of 3,267 trees, including 607 huge ones (more than 10 cm diameter and 3 m height).

Activists said it is the only green patch remaining in Ramdev Park. "A swimming pool seemed more important than the remaining green patch in the city, said Krishna Gupta, social activist from Bhayander.

Interestingly, the trees were planted by the municipality over two years ago with the help of an environmental NGO to create a Japanese-style Zen garden.

Among the trees that were to be uprooted included an eight-year-old shade tree *Peltophorum*, a six-year-old Gulmohar, Foxtail Palm and Cassia Fistula. At least 77 Cluster Fig trees (Umbar in Marathi), known for its medicinal value, over 90 flowering trees *Lagerstroemia Speciosa* (Taman), 98 Orchid trees have been identified for transplantation.

In June, the civic body laid the foundation stone of the four Olympic-size swimming pools— two in Ramdev Park and one each in Mahajanwadi (Mira Road) and Sachin Tendulkar ground (Bhayander east).

BJP leader Ravi Vyas who had written to the civic administration to look for alternate location to construct the pool said the green cover was created to maintain balance of the environment.