



Govt currency press fined Rs240 crore

Vaishali Balajiwale

The Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) has fined the currency notes press (CNP), located at Nashik Road, Rs240 crore for its failure to pay octroi duty on the paper imported for printing currency notes. The fine is 10 times the defaulted amount, which is close to Rs23.98 crore.

The CNP, a central govt entity, imports paper from Sweden and Switzerland. The paper is brought to Nashik under police bandobast directly from the Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai. As the cargo is accompanied by police protection, it is not stopped at octroi nakas and instead the CNP pays the duty to the NMC. However, since the last four years, the CNP has failed to pay the dues against octroi to NMC.

NMC commissioner BD Sanap stated that in the last four years the CNP has brought paper worth Rs795.98 crore to its press in Nashik. It was required to pay Rs23.98 crore as octroi duty, which it did not.

The corporation had sought information from the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust authorities about how much material has been sent to Nashik from the docks in the last five years. It came to light then that CNP had failed to pay its dues. The octroi department of the NMC pursued the matter with CNP authorities after which they paid the due amount.

However, the NMC has sent a notice to the CNP as defaulters and has asked to pay Rs240 crore as penalty, Sanap said.

Cong MLA has plans on gardens, greens see red

Annie Shekhar wants to construct a study centre in Colaba, meditation rooms in Marine Lines

Linah Baliga

Despite the public outrage over depleting public open spaces in the city, a Congress legislator is keen on constructing a Vipassana meditation centre and a study centre in two gardens at prime localities in south Mumbai. This, activists say, is in clear violation of open space policy norms.

Annie Shekhar, the Congress lawmaker, plans to utilise her MLA funds to construct a study centre at Deepak Jyot garden near the Colaba fire brigade office, and a Vipassana centre in Walter D'Souza garden near Liberty Cinema in Marine Lines, which in fact, comes under the heritage precinct.

Architects GM Redkar and Associates, have approached the Mumbai Heritage Conservation Committee (MHCC) with the designs for the projects, DNA has learnt. The heritage panel will take a decision next week.

"Only Walter D'Souza garden comes under the purview of heritage sites. It (the Vipassana centre) will be a 148 sq metre construction with brick walls. It will be an



Walter D'Souza garden near Liberty Cinema on Marine Lines is a heritage site —Prakash Paresekar DNA

SPACE JAM

The Vipassana centre will be a 148 sq metre construction with brick walls. It will be an enclosed structure with two rooms and a toilet. It will be an L-shaped structure with the centre open for a lobby

The study centre will be made of stone. It will not have any wooden furniture

enclosed structure with two rooms, for gents and ladies, and a toilet. It will be an L-shaped structure with the centre open for a lobby. The overall look will merge with the aesthetics of the garden and will not disturb the walkways," said architect Padmakar Redkar.

Elaborating on the plans for Deepak Jyot garden, Redkar

said, "It's a tiny 90 sq m garden and the study centre will be made of stone. It will not have any wooden furniture. The MLA funds will be transferred through Mhada and they will construct and hand it over to the collector, who has already given us a no objection certificate."

Meanwhile, the greens are seeing red over this proposal.

"This cannot be done. We do not need Vipassana or study centres. We will do everything within our capacity to stop this," said Neera Punj, convener Citispace, an NGO fighting for preservation of open spaces in the city. In an open space nothing is permitted barring one 10x10 mali chowki, Punj added.

"Gardens and parks are

non-buildable areas. There is a study corner at the Horniman Circle garden. But they have not covered it up and it was done before rules and regulations were in place. Also, people can always meditate on the grass at Oval maidan. Why do we need construction in a garden?" said Nayan Kathpalia, co-convener, Citispace. Citispace will approach the heritage panel.

When contacted, Annie Shekhar's son Vinod Shekhar, a local Congress corporator, said: "It will be an open, study-cum-Vipassana centre for the poor. We have got NOCs from the collector and the ministry of environment and forests for coastal regulatory zone clearance. They won't be closed structures and there will be no constructions."

MLA funds were utilised in the past for a similar study centre in the Cooperage garden and many poor students have benefited from it. This is her best work as an MLA and all NGOs and elected representatives should construct such centres, Shekhar said.

Earlier this week, there was a debate over open spaces in the BMC's general body meeting.



Last year, the Lalbaugcha Raja Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav Mandal's turnover was around Rs17 crore —File photo

Lalbug Ganesh mandal to set up dialysis centre

Santosh Andhale

FUND RAISER

For the first time in its 75-year history, the Lalbaugcha Raja Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav Mandal (LRSGM) has committed its resources to a specific project: setting up of a dialysis centre for economically backward renal failure patients.

The mandal, which donates only to individuals, has earmarked Rs2 crore for the facility from the donations it expects to receive during Ganesh festival this year.

"We requested the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to lease us a 3,000 sq metre plot in Lower Parel. The project has been approved and the centre will be opened to the public by Dusshera in October," said Sudhir Salvi, secretary of the mandal.

The centre will have 16 dialysis machines and will also be equipped with a pathological laboratory, where people can get tests done at nominal costs.

Nephrologists agree that the city critically needs a dialysis centre. "A substantial percentage of the population suffers from renal failure is unable to afford dialysis. There is a long waiting list for treatment at clinics, as kidney patients are required to undergo dialysis thrice a week. However, most undergo dialysis just once in 15 days," said Dr Jatin Kothari, nephrologist, Hinduja Hospital. Private hospitals charge

between Rs1,000 to Rs1,500 for dialysis treatment.

The mandal has also roped in the expertise of Dr Sanjay Oak, dean, KEM Hospital, for the project.

"We spend around Rs2 crore annually on medical aid for the poor. Recently, we opened a library at Lalbug. We also run daily yoga classes for 300 women, apart from an advanced computer training centre and a 24-hour study centre," said Satish Khankar, president, LRSGM. "We have a separate outlay for education, and give scholarships to deserving students. We have also paid fees for poor students."

LRSGM is among the city's richest mandals, with donations pouring in not only from Mumbai, but from across the world. Last year, the mandal's Ganeshotsav turnover was around Rs17 crore.

Mother Teresa to come alive in a comic book

Arcopol Chaudhuri

Amar Chitra Katha (ACK), the publisher of Tinkle Digest and illustrated mythological books, will launch a book on Mother Teresa on August 26 to celebrate her 100th birth anniversary.

The book will narrate how Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, an Albanian by birth, made India her home and worked towards alleviating poverty and loneliness. After her death in 1997, she was beatified by Pope John Paul II and given the title Blessed Teresa of Calcutta.

"What inspired a 12-year-old girl to travel to a far-away country to help the poor and bring joy to thousands of lives forms the crux of the story," said Savita Pai, VP, product management, ACK Media.

Targeted at readers aged between 8-14 years, Pai said the book aims to tell children that it is never too early to fix a goal in life. "August 26, 2010, being the centennial year of Mother Teresa's birth is the perfect day to make people learn from a noble figure like her," she said.

The 40-page storybook

LIFE ILLUSTRATED



The 40-page storybook, which has been about 10 months in the making, entailed the researcher and scriptwriter Shalini Srinivasan working closely with Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata

which has been about 10 months in the making entailed the researcher and scriptwriter Shalini Srinivasan working closely with Missionaries of Charity in


Kolkata. The book has been illustrated by Sri Lankan artist Atula Siriwardane, who has drawn many ACK Media titles.

"While creating such a title,

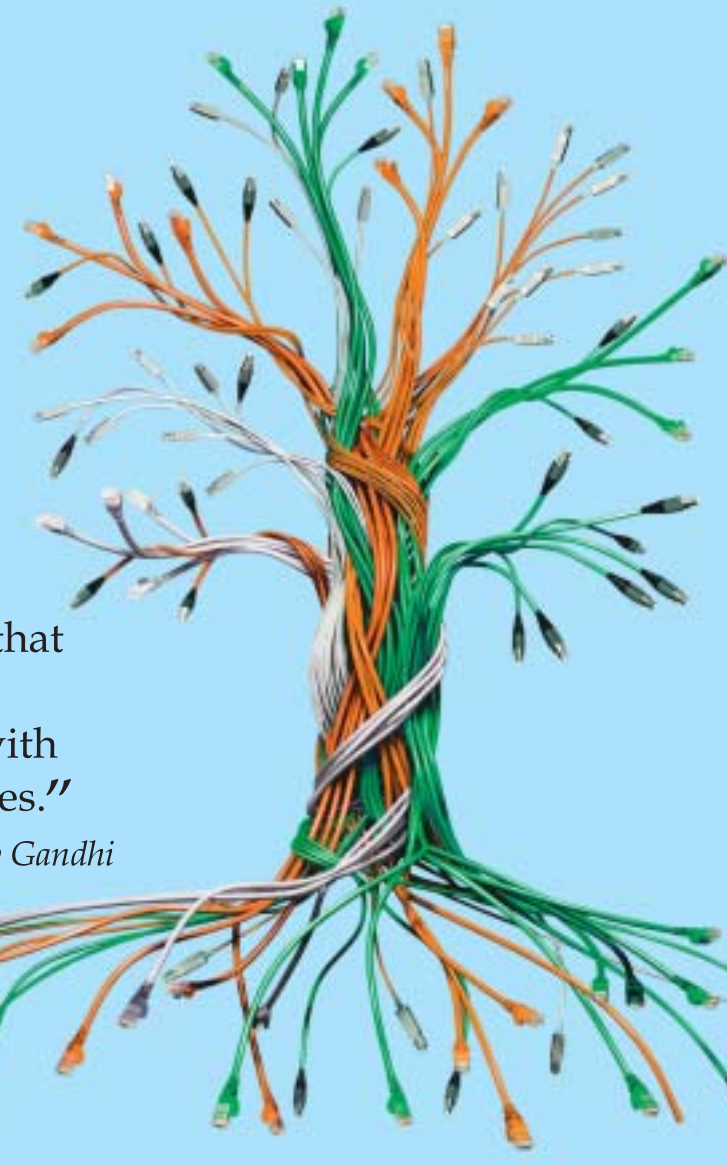
our primary concern is authenticity. We have done intense research, not just from empirical recorded data, but also through meetings and interviews with people who knew Mother closely," said Reena Puri, editor, ACK.

"We volunteered with the missionaries and also met Sister Gertrude, who was one of the first two Sisters to join Mother Teresa," she added.

ACK Media will also make the book available on Amazon Kindle, besides the iPhone (as a mobile comic) and in retail stores.



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