

**Minutes of the Ridge Management Board meeting held on 16.04.2004 in the Conference Room of the Chief Secretary, Govt. of NCT of Delhi.**

The meeting of the Ridge Management Board was held on 16.04.2004 at 11:30 A.M. The meeting was chaired by the Chief Secretary, Govt. of NCT of Delhi. The list of the officers who attended the meeting is annexed.

The Board reviewed action taken report on the directions given in the last meeting held on 19.11.2003. Thereafter the agenda items were discussed and the decisions taken in the meeting are as follows:

**1. FRI study on the Flora of Ridge area:**

RMB was apprised that draft final report on vegetation survey and inventorization of species in Delhi Ridge has been received from Forest Research Institute, Dehradun. A brief on the report was submitted before RMB.

**2. Protection & fencing of Central Ridge:**

RMB expressed concern that CPWD has not yet started fencing of Central Ridge. The Chief Engineer, CPWD apprised the Board that the estimate of fencing of Central Ridge has been submitted. The proposal for transferring the management of Central Ridge to the Forest Department of Govt. NCT of Delhi has been submitted to the Hon'ble Minister of Urban Development, GOI for sanction.

The Chairperson directed CPWD to maintain the area of Central Ridge area under their possession properly in all respects till the decision of transfer of management of Central Ridge is taken. CPWD was directed not to further delay construction of fencing around the Central Ridge. As with each passing day the amount of malba was increasing, there being no watch and ward either in the daytime or night. CPWD was also directed to remove the malba dumped along the Ridge road immediately. If satisfactory progress was not found RMB had no alternative other than giving a factual report to the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

**Issue of dumping of malba in the Central Ridge:**

The RMB expressed its displeasure that CPWD is not taking any action to prevent dumping of malba along the Upper Ridge road and Shankar road, which is an eyesore and degrading the natural character of the adjoining portion of Ridge. RMB was informed that the malba is usually of broken building material derived from reconstruction of buildings being done in the neighboring localities of Karol Bagh, Patel Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, etc. The malba is usually dumped in the odd hours of the night. RMB desired



that a co-ordinated action plan should be worked out by Police, Forest, CPWD, MCD & other concerned agencies.

- (i) One PCR van should be deployed for patrolling at odd hours on Upper Ridge road and Shankar road for controlling malba dumping and apprehending the offenders. ( Action: Police Deptt. / Jt. Commissioner Police)
- (ii) Deterrent action to be taken against the offenders dumping malba and such vehicle should be impounded. ( Action: Police Deptt/ Jt. Commissioner Police)
- (iii) Entry of trucks should be regulated in night and the trucks carrying malba/waste materials towards Ridge area should not be allowed to ply on Shankar Road and Upper Ridge road by the traffic police. ( Action: Police Deptt/ Jt. Commissioner Police)
- (iv) The malba should be cleaned immediately from the site.(Action: CPWD)
- (v) Sign boards to be placed at appropriate location prohibiting public for dumping of malba in Ridge area. (Action: CPWD)

3. Unfiltered water supply to Budha Jayanti Park:

CPWD informed that the unfiltered water channel will pass along the road and only 2-3 ft. digging along the road will solve the purpose. Pipeline will not enter into the Ridge area and no tree will be damaged. The Conservator of Forest informed the RMB about the names of the agencies obtained from the MCEF; GOI. CPWD may engage one of the agencies to conduct an environment impact assessment study and send a report to RMB for approval.

4. Development of Mahavir Vanasthali:

The Secretary, E&F, Govt. of NCT of Delhi apprised her observations on the various construction activities carried out at Mahavir Vanasthali in which some of the activities has been proposed to be accepted and some to be removed.

Shri Ravi Aggarwal, Member RMB opposed the regularization of the activities done in the Ridge area by CPWD without prior permission of the competent authority. He raised concern that if regularized it would set an unhealthy precedent and give the opportunity for others to violate the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. It was decided that Chairperson would write to DG, CPWD for taking action against the officials involved and a report on the action taken against the official would be asked to be sent to the RMB as authorities decided to have a soft line on such issues. The RMB also accepted the report of the Secretary (E&F) and desired that the proposal should be recommended as per the observations of the Secretary, (Env. & Forests) to the Govt. of India for approval under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. A copy of the report of the Secretary, (Env. & Forests) was to be endorsed to CPWD.



5. Unauthorized construction in the Central Ridge near Dasghara village by DDA and dumping of malba on large scale:

RMB reviewed the progress made in respect of compliance of its directions to DDA. RMB was apprised of the reply of the Vice Chairman, DDA in response to the letter of the C.S. & Chairperson, RMB. VC, DDA submitted that it would be unfair to take action against any official because violation of FCA, 1980 was unintentional. VC, DDA had apprised that in view of the past history of the case, sentiment of the people and the fact that the cremation ground has been in existence for the past more than 40 years dismantling of approach road to crematorium would lead to public resentment. RMB also perused the report of the Monitoring Committee, which inspected the site on 04.03.2004.

RMB after detailed deliberations took the following decision:

i). Issue of Crematorium

The RMB took into account the concerns expressed by the V.C. DDA relating to the sentiments of the people of Dashgara village including 522 unauthorized structures, which have been allowed to continue in the Ridge area by the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. It also appreciated the efforts of DDA to develop 7.2 hectares of its land near Nanakpura Gurudwara adjacent to Ridge for afforestation. It was however of the view that long term continuation of the cremation ground would lead to more demands from the villagers for construction of access road to the cremation ground and other related amenities which in turn would lead to damage to the Ridge. The RMB felt that since only 6 bodies were cremated in the last 6 months, the problem was not insurmountable and the interest of the villagers could be protected by providing a cremation site within 3-4 KMs from the village area. Moreover, the existence of cremation ground was not reflected in the revenue records and the Supreme Court had not passed any specific orders for its continuation. The RMB, therefore, was of the view that allowing the cremation will lead to newer demands for more development works/ facilities in the form of non-forestry activities and in the name of cremation it would not be possible to deny access to timber for the cremation and it would be difficult to maintain watch and ward over the activities. The number of times the cremation ground was used is very small and in the rest of Delhi people traveled much longer distances whereas the nearest cremation ground was only 3 km. away. DDA was directed to workout a plan to close this cremation ground and advise the residents to utilize the nearby crematorium at Inderpuri, Naraina etc. which are at only 3 KM distance. It was also decided to request the VC, DDA to admonish the officials/officers of the DDA who had allowed construction of an approach road to cremation ground and further to issue instructions not to carry out any further development works without the special approval of the Ridge Management Board.



ii). Removal of Malba:

Shri Shakhhar Dey, DDA representative informed that the work of removal of malba is in progress and around 20,000 cum of malba has already been removed. He requested Traffic Police Authorities to allow plying of vehicles during daytime also so that trucks can transport malba even during daytime. RMB requested Shri Satish Chandra, Joint Commissioner of Police representing the Police Commissioner, Delhi to look into the matter and give permission selectively with a view to completing the exercise in a time bound way.

iii). Monitoring of compliance on directions of RMB:

The monitoring Committee should continue to inspect the site and report within 15 days on the removal of malba and on compliance of directions of RMB.

iv). Passage to local people through Ridge:

DDA representative informed that the broken portions of the boundary wall have been repaired. However, boundary wall of a portion of Ridge where currently malba is being removed is frequently broken by people of Dasghara who use this stretch as a passage and it is not possible to stop the movement of people which is quite sizeable. He suggested that a passage of 3-4 M width should be left for the movement of local people with barriers for heavy vehicles and the passage should be bounded on either side by high wall to stop entry into Ridge for protection of the Ridge. While in principle barricading was agreed to, it was decided that the plan in this regard may be submitted to RMB.

v). Afforestation of the Ridge:

RMB directed DDA to start afforestation of area cleared of malba of the Ridge immediately.

vi). PIL in High Court regarding:

RMB was informed that next date of hearing in the High Court is on 05.05.2005 and the Court has to be apprised regarding action taken by RMB on the matter.

6. Shifting of colonies from Wildlife Sanctuary to alternative site:

In the last meeting Slum & JJ Deptt., MCD had assured RMB that shifting will be completed within 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004 which has not yet been done. RMB took a serious note that the shifting of colonies out of Southern Ridge has not yet been completed although the funds were placed as far back during 1997. The representative of Slum & JJ Deptt. informed the RMB that alternative plots for shifting of colonies have



already been developed at Bawana and it will be shifted within a month. Chairperson asked Slum & JJ Deptt. to submit the plan of shifting by 25.04.2004.

7. **Shifting of Maurice Nagar Police Station:**

The RMB was concerned that Maurice Nagar Police Station has not yet shifted in spite of repeated directions given by the RMB. Shri Satis Chandra, Joint C.P. informed RMB that Police Commissioner is personally taking up the matter with Vice Chancellor, Delhi University and DDA & the shifting of Maurice Nagar Police Station will be done soon.

8. **Final notification of the Ridge:**

The Conservator of Forests apprised the RMB that appeals against the orders of FSO have been filed in four cases before the appellate authority where significant forest area is involved. RMB requested the FSO to settle the pending cases immediately.

9. **Demarcation in disputed portion of Southern Ridge:**

Chief Engineer, IFCD apprised the RMB the progress of the construction of boundary wall in the interstate boundary at Bhatti. Conservator of Forests informed that matter has already been taken up with Survey of India, Delhi unit for getting the boundary re-demarcated on the site.

RMB advised the Conservator of Forests to liaise with Survey of India, to expedite the re-demarcation and in case intervention of CS was needed seek the same. The perforations in the wall were leading to illegal mining and the completion of the wall should be got done on priority.

**Illegal mining in Bhatti area:**

RMB expressed concern over the reports of illegal mining at Bhatti area. The Secretary (E&F) informed that a meeting was held with concerned Police Authorities, District Administration, Eco Task Force and Forest Deptt. to work out the strategy to check illegal mining. Following action plan have been made to check the illegal mining:

- i) The possibility of issue of notification under the relevant provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 should be explored for making stringent punishment to the offenders.
- ii) Joint regular and surprise patrolling especially in the night by the Forest, ETF & Police officials should be done. The Joint Commissioner Police was requested to convene a meeting to work out the strategy in association with Conservator of Forests.



- iii) Signboards displaying the activities banned in the sanctuary/ Ridge Forest area and provisions of various Acts applicable to the sanctuary area should be placed at various vulnerable sites.
- iv) Publicity should be done by involving the various environmental NGOs.
- v) As per the provision of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1980, SDM should impose the maximum penalty to the offender and offence should not be compounded rather the vehicles, tools involved in illegal mining should be impounded.
- vi) The routes/ approach roads to Sanctuary/ Ridge area should be blocked by digging pits/ trenches by JCB so that entry of trucks/ vehicles can be checked.

The Secretary, (E&F) was asked to monitor that the agencies concerned implemented these directions.

**10. Status of encroachment in Southern Ridge:**

RMB was informed that the issue of encroachment/ allotment in the Gaon Sabha lands notified in the southern Ridge has not yet been settled. Some of the areas have been allotted by the Revenue Deptt. under various schemes before the issue of notification of the forests and some of the areas were having habitation and palka structures in these Gaon Sabha lands. A Detail report showing the factual position as existing on the ground was sent to Revenue Department for verification. The requisite information on allotment of lands in the Gaon Sabha land of Southern Ridge and their status has not been received by the RMB.

The Divisional Commissioner was requested to look into the matter and have a meeting of concerned officials so that to the extent feasible, non-forestry activities should be withdrawn from the Ridge area.

**11. Construction of water reservoir near Tuglakabad by DJB:**

RMB in principle agreed to the proposal of Delhi Jal Board for diversion of forest area of 11,000 square meters in the Southern Ridge under the control of DDA for construction of underground reservoir being essential part of the project, which is being executed for augmenting drinking water supply. DDA and DJB authorities informed that they had already explored the possibility of locating the project outside notified forest area but have not found any suitable alternative site. RMB recommended the proposal for diversion of forest area for the proposal.

The Conservator of Forests brought to the notice of RMB that as the area in question falls under Southern Ridge which has already been notified under Section- 4 of Indian (Forest) Act, 1927 for constitution of Reserved Forest, therefore, the proposal on recommendation of the State Govt. will be sent to the MOE, Govt. of India for

necessary clearance under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Secretary, (E&F) was asked to examine this as the water reservoir was an essential requirement and could not wait. Further, it would be a one time activity and would not lead to either habitation or being used as a public thoroughfare.

12. Improvement of water channels/ bodies in Budha Jayanti Park:

During inspection of Secretary (E&F) it was observed that various water channels/ water bodies in the Budha Jayanti park are not properly maintained and due to water stagnation it is highly polluted. CPWD informed that if the proposal for untreated water supply to the Budha Jayanti Park is cleared then these channels can be maintained by flowing the running water which will improve the condition of channels. CPWD was asked to clean the stagnant water channels/ bodies and keep them dry till the decision on the supply of untreated water so that there are no pollution hazards.

The meeting ended with thanks to the chair.