

## Mumbai Coastal Road Project

### Why in News?

The Supreme Court stayed a Bombay High Court order that had quashed Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance granted to the southern part of Mumbai's coastal road project.

### What is Mumbai's Coastal Road project?

- The **Bandra-Worli Sea Link** in Mumbai, the financial capital of India was originally planned as one arm of a longer sea link.
- The longer one would connect Bandra, queen of the suburbs, with Nariman Point, the commercial hub of south Mumbai.
- The Worli-Haji Ali Sea Link was already tendered out, in 2011, when the then Chief Minister (CM) suggested replacing it with a coastal road.
- This coastal road will be a sea-kissing highway that would be less expensive than a sea link.
- The sea links were then being planned and executed by Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC).
- The government appointed a technical committee and it reported the approximate cost of the sea link and for the reclamation of land along the coast for a seaside highway.
- The Worli-Haji Ali Sea Link project was cancelled abruptly and replaced with **plans for a coastal road connecting Nariman Point with Kandivali**, a suburb towards the northern end of the western seaboard.
- This planned freeway will complement another freeway running along the eastern coastline, from South Mumbai to Chembur.
- This coastal road will reduce travel time between Nariman Point and Kandivali.
- Eventually, the then CM also decided that the coastal road would be built by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, not the MSRDC.
- The Bandra-Worli Sea Link was completed in 2009.
- In the decade since, traffic between the suburbs and south Mumbai has grown even as Mumbaikars wait for the next logical arm of the proposed connectivity between Bandra and Nariman Point.

### Were all approvals for the project in place before litigation began?

- **Reclamation** - In June 2015, the central government gave permissions for the reclamation for the project.
- Much of Mumbai as we know it today is on reclaimed land, and the proposed reclamation for the coastal road was given the nod conditional to final CRZ clearances.
- **First proposal** - In 2016, the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority (MCZMA) accorded sanction.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) considered the proposal for CRZ clearance but later it rejected this.
- The Ministry said that the proposal lacked a disaster management plan, the environment impact reports had lacunae and there was also no approval from the state and central pollution control bodies.
- It also said the proposal failed to highlight the exceptional circumstances for grant of clearances for reclamation.
- **Revised proposal** - In October 2016, the BMC submitted a revised proposal to the MCZMA, limiting it to the first phase of the project.
- This is a 9.9-km coastal road from Marine Drive to the Worli or south end of the Bandra-Worli Sea Link.
- Only 90 hectares would be reclaimed in this phase.
- The MoEF&CC granted its final CRZ approval in May 2017.

### **What is the dispute?**

- Environmentalists, activists and fishermen opposed the project.
- Their main contention was that the BMC is implementing the project with faulty green clearances accorded in 2017 by the MoEFF&CC.
- They have claimed the project lacks a mandatory prior Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) clearance under the EIA notification of 2006.
- Activists had demanded that a biodiversity study of the Mumbai coast is also required before going ahead.
- They also called a National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) report flawed as it relied on only 14 days' pre-monsoon data.
- An EIA study requires impact in all four seasons to be studied, they contended.
- Fishermen also claimed that the reclamation will destroy shallow water fishing and increase the turbidity of water, and that the narrow gaps between pillars will hinder movement of fishing boats.

### **Is the proposed road to be entirely built on new reclamation?**

- According to the BMC designs, the coastal road will be a combination of,
  1. Roads on stilts;
  2. Roads built on reclamation, a small sea link our bridge portion,

3. A proposed under-sea tunnel,
  4. The Bandra-Worli Sea Link.
- The rest of the highway is to be considered in Phase 2, for which clearances are still to be sought.
  - This will include a coastal road from the Bandra end of the Sea Link till Khar Danda village, where a small bridge on the sea-ward side of Chimbai village will provide navigation space for fishing boats.
  - The land filled road is proposed to be designed so that it does not obstruct a dense mangrove patch here.
  - A spur is to be built for future connectivity all the way to Madh Island.
  - Of the 35-km freeway, roughly 18 km will be constructed on reclaimed land. The two tunnels will be about 9 km in length.

### **What happens now?**

- After the SC stayed the Bombay HC's July order, the BMC will resume reclamation work at four points - Priyadarshini Park, Napeansea Road, Haji Ali and Worli.
- In July, when the HC had quashed the MoEF&CC's CRZ clearance for the southern stretch of the project, the BMC had already completed 4 to 5% of reclamation required at these sites.
- Having exhausted their legal remedies, the petitioners were disappointed with the SC order, said they would work with the government and authorities.
- They also said that they would try to ensure that the livelihood of fishermen is not impacted.

**Source: Indian Express**

