

City environmentalist submits restoration plan of Pratapgad fort to State Dy CM

Ajit Pawar Sanctions Rs 1.31 Cr As First Part Of The Budget Of Rs 13 Cr For The Renovation Project

George Mendonca

Navi Mumbai: An environmentalist and a resident of NRI-Seawoods complex Kaustubh Butala (34) has taken up the task to undertake restoration of the historical Pratapgad Fort, which is gradually crumbling down due to its dilapidated state allegedly due to the lackadaisical attitude of the state government.

Butala, president of Pratapgad Jirnodhar Samiti met Deputy CM Ajit Pawar at Sahayadri Guest House on February 2 and presented a proposal of renovation work carried out so far by the Samiti and also sought monetary contribution from the state government.

Also present at the meeting were the Principal Secretary (Planning and Additional Charge of Finance) Sudhir Srivastava, MTDC Director Avinash Dhakane, MLA Shashikant Shinde, MLA Makrand Patil, Members of Pratapgad Jirnodhar Samiti Nihar Shet, Deepak Shinde, SDO of Wai Taluka Kumar Khaire and State Archaeology officer.

Butala informed, "At the meeting, it was decided that the state will contribute for the renovation of Pratapgad fort as per the plan submitted by the Pratapgad Jirnodhar Samiti. A proposal spread over 4 years with cost overlay of Rs 13 crore was accepted by the government and the first tranche of Rs 1.31 crore was immediately released by the deputy CM Ajit Pawar from the contingent advance fund (C.F. Advance fund) as in case of emergency, the government can draw CF Advance fund to permit taking up works urgently. Such works are then to be got included in the budget in the immediate next session of the Assembly. The fund will now be would be spent under the supervision of the Collector of Satara and DPDC (District Planning and Development Council) officer. The outlay for next year of Rs. 4.87 crore was also budgeted. However, the Samiti has used its funds and completed the initial renovation work by applying lime mortar to the outer wall of the fort to plug the wide gaps developed over these years. We have been carrying out the work for last 3 years by utilizing my individual donation amount of around Rs 60 lakh to the Samiti. By using lime mortar, we have completed the work of the Buruj (fortification) named Dhvaj Buruj. Pawar praised the dedication of the members of the Samiti and promised to extend all possible support from the government. He committed that within a fortnight, the provisioning of Rs.1.38 crore would be transferred to DPDC Satara, the apex planning body of the district. Our Samiti will contribute Rs 3 crore for the work."

Informing about the Pratapgad Renovation Proposal, Butala said, "Among the hundreds of

forts of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Pratapgad is an important fort. The restoration work was an arduous task as there were number of obstacles due to the vast expanse and tremendous expenses to be incurred. It can be achieved by public participation and government support. Considering the fast growing tourism industry worldwide, Pratapgad will be marked as a famous historical place to visit in the future. Pratapgad is the first fort built by Maharaj and hence its importance can be understood. This unique fort if preserved properly, developed with latest facilities and brought in limelight, will be a major attraction for the tourists not only of India but across the globe."

As per the proposal, presently, the original structures and

owned by the Satara Chhatrapati family. The rampart wall and the protective wall above it are totally ruined at some places. At remaining places the wall is half demolished and the top portion of the wall is totally ruined. The original painting work has also faded away and disappeared. The stone arch ceilings and the wooden shutters of the two doors are completely ruined. Trees and shrubs are growing on the rampart walls and the bastions near these doors. The important bastions of the fort are in a ruined condition. Some five years ago, the armor wall of the Flag bastion broke and fell down. This portion had become very dangerous for tourists. Other bastions are also becoming ruined due to lack of repairs and the growing trees. The drain holes



HOLDING FORT: The restoration work would largely help regain the glory of the fort that holds great historic significance

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— Kaustubh Butala

PRESIDENT, PRATAPGADH JIRNODHAR SAMITI

buildings of the fort are in a dilapidated condition. The fort is in a sorry state. The area covered by the fort is 51.50 acres. Rampart wall of the fort is 3 km long, average 20 feet high and 4.5 to 8.0 feet thick. Parapet wall above rampart is 1.5 feet to 3 feet thick. There are three main doors and six secret doors along with four tanks for water supply. Plinths of sadar (Royal Court) and the palace of Jijau can be seen. There are two major temples on the fort. The Bhavani temple was built by Shivaji Maharaj. The other temple is the Kedareshwar temple in the citadel. The statue of Shivaji Maharaj is situated at the highest point on the fort where once the palace of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was standing tall. The fort has 12 bastions, the most famous amongst them is the flag bastion on the Eastern end of the fort. The Bhavani temple is

meant for draining rain water out of the fort are choked. Due to this large amount of soil and debris is deposited at the bottom of the inner side of rampart walls and bastions. The water supply tanks on the fort are accumulated with sediments and debris. The retaining walls and gutters are totally ruined. Due to leakages the storing capacity of these tanks has been badly affected. The pathway made on the fort for tourists is also in a bad condition. The checkered tiles fitted on the pathway are broken at many places. For about 300 years, Pratapgad is exposed to the attack of nature. Heavy rainfall, growing trees, negligence, lack of repairs and maintenance are the main reasons behind the ramshackle condition of the fort. If not restored and repaired, this historical monument will not survive for a long time.

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'Plans afoot to make the fort self-reliant'

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Navi Mumbai: Kaustubh Butala emphasised, "One of the important achievements would be restoring the lakes to original condition. This will make the fort self-reliant and by catching the rain water the need of expensive pipeline replacement may be totally scrapped. The lakes had retaining walls on all sides to stop the muddy water and other debris entering the lake area, the same condition of lake will be restored. This work is to be done in two stages. In the

dome/ Vipashyana centre were studied for getting a perspective on lime stone mortar. The fort with its remains was examined minutely and evidence gathered to obtain correct picture of the fort in the past. This was possible because the fort was not destroyed by the British like other forts. Supply of correct stone, sand and lime is an important factor in this project. The availability of this material is considered as stone - from Karad / Bhor, Sand - from Umbraj and Lime - from Rajasthan (procured from wholesalers in Mumbai/Sa-

Work done till date:

The most proper technique of restoring historical monuments includes use of lime mortar. To preserve the originality, antiquity & rareness of these structures lime must be used. For these reasons lime is used in the restoration of Pratapgad instead of cement. This might be the only fort project where only lime mortar is used for restoration. The various proportions of lime to be used for masonry, coba, plastering, pointing and waterproofing are finalized. The lime mortar mixer - grinder is fitted on the fort and the restoration work is being carried out after studying the old structures.

Cleaning & waste disposal is being carried out, the trees, shrubs & grass grown the structures are removed, web site of the work www.pratapgad.in has been launched, plastic bottles and waste are collected regularly and being given for recycling, guide training program is carried out and a guide book has been published, advertising boards (50 nos. of 2feet x 3 feet size) are displayed at Mahabaleshwar to increase tourism, program of one lakh tree plantation in the foothills has been started, a small exhibition of important forts of Maharashtra is displayed on Pratapgad permanently, project report of the work has been published, information about the wild life and biodiversity at Pratapgad fort is being collected as a part of environmental awareness and protection programme.

Butala concluded, "With the help and co-operation from the government of Maharashtra, PJS shall continue to strive for completing the renovation project in a proper scientific manner thereby restoring the fort to its past glory. Since, public participation plays a vital role in achieving the target, the generous donors are requested to contribute for the project by lending a helping hand to the efforts being taken by the Samiti."

first stage, the works related to the fort structures will be completed and in the second stage, the work of the modern buildings and other secondary works will be carried out to attract tourists. Even the Archeological society of India (ASI) does not use 100% lime mortar nevertheless at all stages the ASI officers gave valuable inputs in preparation of this report. Accurate measurements of the fort were taken by trained survey technicians over a period of 2 months to arrive at accurate area and unit quantities. The fort was divided into three parts as per the increasing height. Making charges for stone were calculated by hiring trained labourers and making stones of various sizes. The same was added to procurement charges for stone from quarries but only those that were available without use of blasting. Forts like Shivneri and Raigad were surveyed to understand the best practices used by ASI. The projects like Gorai

tara). The sand from Umbraj is river sand and is ideal to be used for lime mortar and likewise for stone and lime. The leads are considered for transportation charges from the above mentioned places of procurement. Due to heavy rainfall, work cannot be done for four months (June to September) every year and hence this fact is considered while calculating the time required for project completion.

Butala added, "The Pratapgad Jirnodhar Samitee has approximately Rs 7 lakh balance in its account and many individuals have committed to contribute as work progresses. Till date, renovation work of around Rs 40 lakh has been completed. Direct material and machinery have been supplied by individuals and corporates. Some work was carried out by the contribution given by a local trust namely Mai Bhavani Samajik Sanstha while some work has been carried out by using the local MLA fund."