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What should Mumbai's climate action plan do? Mitigate & adapt

As climate talks kick off in Glasgow, TOI asks 4 experts what they'd like to see Mumbai—which is 'always in the build mode'—do for its natural environment while balancing infra needs

'Temporary barriers to water are important'

PUSHPENDRA JOHRI | RISK ANALYST AND SR VICE-PRESIDENT, RMSI

I'd like to see an inundation forecasting system tied into a decision system, and along with that a set of mitigation options. I am also a staunch supporter of temporary solutions that can help people in Mumbai evade some of the problems they face every time it rains. There are many options that could be put into action in a short span of time. We used to have sandbags, nowadays we have inflatable water bags: They inflate with flood water, and once fully filled, they form a bulwark against the water too. They aren't aesthetic but you can make them gel with buildings. You can easily stop 2-3 feet of water if you can put such bags in some places and keep your road network clear. Climate change is happening and nothing we can do locally will change that till at least 2050; we have to mitigate and adapt.

'Coastal infra, green spaces, need upgrade'

RAKESH KUMAR | FORMER DIRECTOR, NEERI

As a coastal city, Mumbai has to worry about inundation. All the infrastructure in the 100-200 metres area near the coastline will



File pic

BARRIERS & MANGROVES CAN HELP REDUCE URBAN FLOODING

need to be retrofitted to deal with issues like salt-water invasion—which can make foundations weaker—and, in the case of storm water drains, potential flooding even in non-monsoon time. We also need to look at improving green spaces near the coastline, whether mangroves or rocky areas. We are seeing a lot of siltation in the creeks that is reducing the capacity of the waterways to hold and flush out water. In the longer term, we need to augment the health infrastructure to deal with climate change-related diseases, and not only for Mumbai but the whole of the metropolitan region.

'Implementation on the ground is what matters'

RASHNEH PARDIWALA | DIRECTOR, CENTRE OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Many policies seem brilliant on paper—like the state climate action report from TERI—but implementation is what matters. I hope it won't be business as usual on the ground. If you look at the energy sector, for instance, there are high renewable energy targets. But GST on renewables was hiked in October from 5% to 12%.

Grand declarations are

fine but what is the ground reality? We need to get down to the nitty gritty details. Mumbai is always going to be in build mode, the question is how green can we make the building of infrastructure? What materials are we using? How many trees are we felling? There are lots of clearances for tree felling for infrastructure projects with compensatory tree plantation. But the principle should be to first conserve what we have.

'Solutions must be inclusive of urban poor'

ROSHNI NUGEHALI | DIRECTOR, SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP YUVA

I'd like to see a strong focus on justice. The action plan should not only focus on environmental concerns and technological solutions but also help the lives of the urban poor. Too often we find that the urban poor, who are not responsible for climate emissions, are the most affected by infrastructure projects and climate change impacts. People who live in slums make a huge contribution to the city, and their rights and needs must be considered in policy responses. It includes improving water and sanitation as well as the conditions of their living and transport. They should not be looked at as a problem but be included in any solution.