

12 November 2025

To,
Shri Devendra Fadnavis,
Chief Minister of Maharashtra,

cc.
Shri Eknath Shinde,
Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra

Shri Ajit Pawar,
Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra

Dear Sir,

We, the undersigned concerned citizens of Mumbai, wish to record our strong objection to the ongoing and indiscriminate monetisation of public land in the city — including railway lands, mill lands, port lands, and other government-owned tracts — for commercial and speculative development.

These lands were originally reserved to serve the people of Mumbai — for housing, open spaces, amenities, transport, and public infrastructure. Instead, they are being steadily diverted to private interests in the name of “revenue generation,” with no coherent policy, no transparency, and no accountability to the citizens who are the real stakeholders.

The outcome is visible: the loss of affordable housing, displacement of long-settled communities, shrinking open spaces, and irreversible transfer of public assets to private hands. The so-called “monetisation” of public land is, in effect, the privatisation of the city’s future.

We categorically reject the notion that public land should be treated as a financial resource to fill fiscal gaps or fund short-term projects. Land held by public bodies is not their property to sell or lease for profit — it is a public trust, held on behalf of citizens and future generations. Once alienated, it can never be recovered.

The government should adhere to the following core principles for public land management:

- **Public Land as a Public Trust:** The State and its agencies are custodians, not owners.
- **Public Land Off the Market:** Remove all public land from speculative or commercial transactions.
- **Public Purpose and Social Equity:** Prioritise housing, open spaces, education, healthcare, and transport over commercial gains.
- **Transparency and Public Participation:** Mandate full disclosure, consultations, and independent review before any decision.
- **Expanding Public Land Stock:** Preserve and increase land held for public use — not diminish it.

To restore integrity and accountability, we demand that the Government of Maharashtra:

- **Issue a White Paper** detailing all public land transactions, leases, and monetisation proposals in Mumbai;
- **Formulate a Unified Public Land Policy** covering all state and central agencies operating in Mumbai, with clear disclosure norms and public consultation procedures;
- **Suspend all ongoing or proposed monetisation initiatives** until such a policy is debated and adopted; and
- **Legislate protections** ensuring that all public land remains reserved for genuine public purposes, based on measurable per-capita requirements for housing, open spaces, and amenities.

Mumbai's land belongs to its people — not to agencies seeking to raise funds or private developers seeking profit. Decisions of such magnitude must not be taken behind closed doors or justified by bureaucratic jargon.

We urge the Maharashtra Government to halt further monetisation of public land, place all proposals in the public domain, and initiate a city-wide consultation with citizen groups, independent experts, and local representatives.

This is not merely a policy matter — it is about the right of every Mumbaikar to live in a just, equitable, and liveable city.

Signed,
Concerned Mumbaikars

Citizens' Concerns Against Privatisation of Public Land

This white paper emerges from a brainstorming meeting organised by Moneylife Foundation on 4 October 2025 at the Mumbai Press Club, which brought together activists, urban planners, architects, researchers and concerned citizens to deliberate on the redevelopment of railway and other public lands in Mumbai. The discussion recognised the urgent need for a collective, evidence-based response to the growing trend of monetising public land under the pretext of redevelopment, infrastructure expansion or revenue generation.

Context

Mumbai's vast tracts of public land—once the foundation for affordable housing, open spaces and social infrastructure—are rapidly shrinking. Over the past two decades, lands belonging to the mills, ports and railways have been successively diverted for commercial development.¹ Such moves have eroded the public domain, displaced working communities and undermined the city's environmental and social fabric.

The most recent proposal for redevelopment of railway land, including suggestions to relocate tracks underground to free surface land for “development,” represents a critical juncture. This approach, seen alongside similar monetisation efforts by other public authorities, raises fundamental questions about who benefits from such “redevelopment,” and at what social and ecological cost.

Monetisation or sale of assets, which are essentially a transfer of rights from the public to private hands, are presented as a source of revenue for the authorities.² However, as these revenue projections are typically overstated, their recovery is a challenge, and even the utilisation of the revenue is rarely for the stated purposes. Occasionally, it is claimed that assets are not being “sold” but leased. This is misleading, since both lease and outright sale amount to the same thing: i.e. a transfer of rights, use and control of the asset from

¹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/fare-hike-and-land-sale-two-more-nails-in-bests-coffin/articleshow/120866544.cms>

² <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/msrtc-to-monetise-its-assets-at-prime-locations-to-overcome-financial-losses-101687115558999.html>

public to private hands. The revenue or benefit of such a handover is merely a justification, and the actual outcome is almost never in the public interest.

Core Principles

1. Public Land as a Public Trust

Public land must serve public purposes and must not be alienated or commodified. All public authorities are custodians or trustees, not owners, of the lands they manage. Distributing public land for commercial exploitation needs to be stopped.

2. Public Purpose and Social Equity

The government must put the land to uses that maximise public benefit. Public land must be reserved for public use. The primary goal of any development must be for essential amenities, open spaces, public housing, and public transport—rather than to maximise commercial returns.

3. Expanding, Not Shrinking, Public Land Stock

Public land is a finite resource that belongs not just to the present generation but to all future ones. The government's duty is to protect and enhance this shared asset for social, civic, and environmental purposes — not to monetise it for short-term revenue or private gain.

4. Public Land Off the Market

Public land should not be treated as a commodity for sale. They should be taken off the market. Any development must ensure that ownership, use, control and benefits remain within the public domain.

5. Transparency and Public Participation

Decisions regarding the use or development of public land should be subject to transparent procedures and meaningful public consultation, including full disclosure of project details and independent review mechanisms.

Policy Recommendations

The current pattern of land redevelopment in Mumbai reflects fragmented governance, opaque decision-making and a lack of coordination between agencies. Development

authorities operate in silos, pursuing individual revenue or commercial objectives without a shared vision for the city's long-term needs. This has led to unequal access to land, loss of open spaces, displacement of communities and urban designs that prioritise private gain over public welfare. The following recommendations outline the structural and policy reforms needed to achieve these goals.

1. Adopt a Unified Public Land Policy for Maharashtra

Develop a public land policy that applies consistent principles (as listed above) to all public authorities — Railways, MMRDA, BMC, MHADA, Revenue, Forest, CIDCO, MIDC, Dairy Department, Mumbai Port Authority, SRA, etc. The policy should require:

- a) Full disclosure of land parcels acquired and notified under the land ceiling act;
- b) Full disclosure of land parcels under public ownership;
- c) Public consultations for any plans or proposals made on these land parcels;
- d) Periodic reporting to the state legislature and a designated oversight body constituted as an independent body of people's representatives, experts and civil society members.
- e) Proposals and plans to expand the available pool of public land, either through direct purchase or acquisition.

2. Public Land, Planning and Consultation

Mumbai has a “balkanised” planning system, where different public authorities carry out their own plans and projects as their own little islands. However, land use planning must be undertaken by the local planning authority irrespective of land ownership.

- a) Many land parcels in the past have been given to public authorities or departments (like MbPA, NTC, Railways, Posts and Telegraph, BSNL, MTNL) or private owners for a specific use at throwaway prices or lease rents. If these lands are no longer used for the specific purposes, they should revert back to the government without compensation.³ Under no circumstances should the

³ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/mumbai-ambedkar-memorial-indu-mill-land-transfer-deal-is-final-2817676/>

various public agencies or private owners be allowed to change their use or monetise their value.

- b) Furthermore, the use of the land, irrespective of land ownership, must be decided by the local planning authority (BMC) through the planning process, and not by the land owner.
- c) All plans for diversion of public land or change of user must undergo a detailed cost benefit analysis, mandatory disclosure, independent oversight and public consultation.
- d) Details of the proposed land uses must be clearly indicated in local development plans
- e) All statutory procedures (notification, suggestions & objections period, and consultations) must be followed for any change of land use on public land.

3. Public Land Exclusively for Public Purposes

Public land is to be used for the highest public purpose, which is to create public amenities—such as affordable public or low-income housing, schools, healthcare facilities and open spaces. The land must be reserved exclusively for:

- a) Publicly managed parks and playgrounds that are open to the sky
- b) Publicly managed amenities for basic healthcare and education
- c) Public housing / low income housing built and managed by the government based on NBCI norms for low income housing. Amenities must be based on land area per capita, and not percentage of land area.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The principles and recommendations outlined in this note are based on the elementary distinction between public and private interests. Public authorities are not owners but stewards of public land. A public authority's mandate is different from the motivations of private landlords or private developers who seek to maximise profits from the land. Alienating public land undermines public interest, and the main consideration for public agencies is what is best and highest public interest. Furthermore, the government must seek to expand rather than shrink public resources.

Acting on the principles and reforms listed above will require a combination of policy commitment, institutional coordination and public accountability. The Government of Maharashtra can take the lead by issuing a comprehensive Public Land Policy directive that applies uniformly to all state and city-level agencies. This policy should be accompanied by clear disclosure norms, standardised evaluation frameworks and mandatory consultation processes.

This white paper represents a collective effort by the undersigned activists, planners, researchers, and citizens who share a common concern for the equitable and sustainable use of Mumbai's public land.

Endorsements

The following individuals and organisations have endorsed this white paper through an open Google Form circulated among citizens, planners and activists who participated in or supported this collective initiative.

Sr.No.	Name	Affiliation
1	Julio Ribeiro	Former Police Commissioner of Mumbai
2	Justice G.S. Patel (retired)	Former Judge, Bombay High Court
3	Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat (retired)	Former Chief of Naval Staff
4	Shailesh Gandhi	Retired. Central Information Commissioner
5	Kumar Ketkar	Journalist and Former Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)
6	Niloufer Bhagwat	Indian Association of Lawyers
7	Mala Ramadorai	Citizen of Mumbai
8	Sucheta Dalal	Moneylife Foundation
9	Debashis Basu	Moneylife Foundation
10	Hussain Indorewala	Assistant Professor & Independent Researcher
11	Stalin Dayanand	Director, NGO Vanashakti
12	Smita Krishna-Godrej	Director of Godrej
13	Gayatri Singh	Senior Advocate, Bombay High Court
14	Ritu Dewan	Retired. Professor, Mumbai School of Economics and Public Policy, University of Mumbai

15	Padma Velaskar	Retd. Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
16	Debi Goenka	Conservation Action Trust
17	G.R. Vora	Trustee, Petition Group Foundation
18	Kalpana Sharma	
19	Abhay Datar	Moneylife Foundation
20	A.V. Shenoy	Mumbai Vikas Samiti
21	Akshay Naik	Moneylife Foundation
22	Yogesh Sapkale	Moneylife Foundation
23	Tushar Pevekar	Moneylife Foundation
24	Hycliff Dabreo	Moneylife Foundation
25	Bhaskar Prabhu	Mahiti Adhikar Manch
26	Samir Zaveri	
27	Sitaram Shelar	Pani Haq Samiti
28	Alan Abraham	Architect
29	Shweta Damle	Habitat & Livelihood Welfare Association
30	Sandhya Gokhale	People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)
31	Shiraz Bulsara Prabhu	People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)
32	Sukla Sen	People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)
33	NGO Alliance for Governance and Renewal (NAGAR)	
34	Parul Kumtha	NGO Alliance for Governance and Renewal (NAGAR)
35	Centre for Democratic Rights (CPDR)	
36	Anuradha Parmar	Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI)
37	Om Damani	
38	Love Your Parks (LYP) Mumbai	
39	Alert Citizens Group	
40	Amchi Mumbai Amchi BEST	
41	Adv. Krishna Gupta	Satyakaam Foundation
42	Dr. Ketna Mehta	Nina Foundation
43	Silloo T. Marker	Mancherji Edalji Joshi Colony Residents Association (MEJCRA)
44	Faredoon Bhujwala	Heritage Society
45	Jeroo Billimoria	One Family Foundation
46	Angeli Pinto Lobo	Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)
47	Devidas Tuljapurkar	Maharashtra State Bank Employees Federation
48	Neeta Kolhatkar	Independent Journalist
49	Freny Manecksha	Independent Journalist

50	Jyoti Punwani	Freelance Journalist
51	Mahesh Vijapurkar	The Hindu
52	Sumit Sharma	Asia Times
53	Rudi Heredia	Society of Jesus
54	Sharad Raj	Independent
55	Professor Dr. Lipika Baliarsing	Citizen of Mumbai
56	Abraham John Architects	
57	Pinkish Shah	S+PS Architects
58	Akram Allahabadi Learning Foundation	
59	Amit Singh	IIT Bombay
60	Dolphy Dsouza	The Bombay Catholic Sabha
61	Francis Colaco	The Bombay Catholic Sabha
62	Samir Fayaz Shaikh	Architecture & Urban Design Studio
63	Aniket Bhatkhande	Wildlife Conservation Trust
64	Banhi Chakraborty	Member, Institute of Town Planners India
65	Lara Jesani	Lawyer, Mumbai
66	Mini Mathew	Advocate
67	Sharmila Kaushik	Advocate
68	Prashant Mali	Lawyer
69	Aparna Ramachandra	Founder-Director, Rectify Credit
70	Radhika Desai	Independent Social Development & Gender Researcher
71	Sudhir Badami	Independent Civil Engineer and Transport Analyst
72	D.S. Ranga Rao	Individual
73	S. Shankar	Independent Researcher
74	Chayanika Shah	Hasrat-e-Zindagi Mamuli Mumbai
75	Dr. Ratna Pal	Nodi Banchao Jibon Banchao
76	Anilkumar Jain	Wadala W Citizens Forum
77	Dhananjay Shinde	Indian National Congress
78	Jennifer Mirza	Retired Film Production manager
79	Mukta Srivastava	Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW)
80	Sana Contractor	Independent Researcher
81	Aditi Kane	Citizen of Mumbai
82	Ahmed Syed	Citizen of Mumbai
83	Ajay Khobragade	
84	Alpana Killawala	Citizen of Mumbai
85	Anita Maitra	Citizen of Mumbai
86	Aruna Rodrigues	Citizen of Mumbai
87	Ashok Khanna	Citizen of Mumbai
88	Beena Choksi	Citizen of Mumbai
89	Behroz Rustomji	Citizen of Mumbai
90	Carol Baig	Citizen of Mumbai
91	Caroline	Citizen of Mumbai
92	Dina Desai	Citizen of Mumbai

93	Geeta K	Citizen of Mumbai
94	Jehangir Rustomji	Citizen of Mumbai
95	Karan Gandhi	Citizen of Mumbai
96	Kashmira Munshi	Citizen of Mumbai
97	Lekha Samant	Citizen of Mumbai
98	Monisha	Citizen of Mumbai
99	Naazia Shah	Citizen of Mumbai
100	Nagesh Alai	Citizen of Mumbai
101	Nandan Maluste	Citizen of Mumbai
102	Narayani Aiyar	Teacher
103	Neesha Jhaveri	Citizen of Mumbai
104	Nina Verma	Citizen of Mumbai
105	Patricia D'Souza	Citizen of Mumbai
106	Payal Mehta	Citizen of Mumbai
107	Pervin Sanghvi	Civil Society
108	Peter Theobald	Citizen of Mumbai
109	Philomena	Citizen of Mumbai
110	Prachi Paranjpye	Citizen of Mumbai
111	Punit Pania	
112	Rani Sagar	Citizen of Mumbai
113	Roy C Aranha	
114	S Arunkumar	Retired Citizen of Mumbai
115	Sadhana	Individual
116	Sancia Sequeira	Citizen of Mumbai
117	Sangeeta Punekar	Citizen of Mumbai
118	Sanjeev Chandorkar	Citizen of Mumbai
119	Satish G Rao	Citizen of Mumbai
120	Satish Mutatkar	Citizen of Mumbai
121	Savitha Rao	Citizen of Mumbai
122	Shrirang V Samant	Citizen of Mumbai
123	Shweta Desai	Citizen of Mumbai
124	Siddhartha Ghosh	Citizen of Mumbai
125	Sonal Alvares	Citizen of Mumbai
126	Svetlana Pinto	Citizen of Mumbai
127	Tanaz Mulla	Citizen of Mumbai
128	Vishal Gupta	Citizen of Mumbai