



COMMUTERS MAY HOP ON TO A 15-CAR LOCAL FROM CHURCHGATE STATION BY JUNE NEXT YEAR | 9

NOISE POLLUTION RULES ARE TOOTHLESS WITHOUT BEING NOTIFIED | 7



With Convoy Of 3 Aircraft, 5 Choppers, And The Centre Mulling Air-Space Closure For 7 Mins, Flight Schedules Will Go Awry

‘Obama Air’ to force at least one-hr delay

Eleven roads will be closed to public

Chinmayi Shalya | TNN

Mumbai: Commercial flights are likely to be delayed by at least an hour when Air Force One, with an escort of three aircraft and five helicopters, touches down at Mumbai airport on Saturday morning. Though officials have yet to receive communication on air-space closure, protocol calls for a gap of six



minutes. During a VVIP visit, no other flight is allowed to land or take off three minutes prior to and after the scheduled time of arrival. In the US President's case, a longer hiatus between his aircraft and other flights is expected. The Centre is considering extending it to ten minutes in order to secure the airport and the skies.

“Even if the closure is for six minutes, one has to take into account the sheer number of aircraft in Obama's entourage,” said an airport official. With nine aircraft, helicopters and planes, scheduled to land on November 6, air-space closure may last for at least 54 minutes. After arriving at Mumbai airport, Obama is expected to fly to the air-base INS Shikra.

“This means that we will have air-space closure for each VVIP aircraft that is landing and taking-off. During this span, the movement of commercial flights will be highly restricted,” the source added.

The exact time Air Force One is expected to land in Mumbai is also being kept under wraps. “As per official communication, he is expected to reach Mumbai by 11.30 am. But it's likely that Air Force One will be landing in the wee hours of November 6,” said an official from Delhi.



UNDER LOCK & KEY: On the eve of the US president's visit, Mumbai policemen keep an eye on the roads and the sea. Over 500 US personnel are in the country to helm the president's security arrangement



Prashant Nakve

Mateen Hafeez | TNN

Mumbai: As many as 11 roads near the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower will be closed during the duration of US President Barack Obama's stay. Colaba has become a fortress with plain-clothes policemen conducting extensive security surveys over the last two days. Exit and entry points to and from the Taj are also being monitored, said officials.

Besides Colaba, Marine Drive, Haji Ali Junction, the junction at Metro, the road opposite the BMC and St Xavier's College will be closed. “We have been told that the Bandra-Worli Sea Link, the Western and Eastern Expressways, Mohammed Ali Road, and J J Flyover will be open on Saturday and Sunday,” said an officer. More than 700 personnel from the traffic police will be posted across the city to monitor traffic flow. “Residents stay-

FIRE POWER

● **3** aircraft and **5** helicopters will be escorting Air Force One as it touches down on Mumbai airport on the morning of November 6

● Air space closure may be enforced for **7** to **10** minutes, though no official announcement has been made. During a VVIP landing, as per protocol, air space closure is **6** minutes

● **4** US Navy and Air Force helicopters conducted trial flights between Mumbai airport and INS Shikra on Wednesday

● **Mayor to meet Prez** | US President Barack Obama is likely to be meeting Mayor Shradha Jadhav in her official capacity as Mumbai's first citizen. The mayor's office has reportedly received communication from the US authorities about the meeting, but there is no clarity on when and where it will take place

● **All's well on the civic front** | Civic officials on Thursday announced that the BMC has completed almost 90% of the road work they had undertaken in preparation for President Obama's visit. “Most of the major repairs took place on Pedder Road. Final touches will be given on Friday,” said Milind Sawant, deputy municipal commissioner

● **Mani Bhavan closed to public** | President Obama's Guard is set to take control of Mani Bhavan on Friday in order to fully sanitize the interiors for Saturday's visit. The memorial will be sealed and out of bounds for tourists as well as students

● **Windows of helibase to be sealed** | The city police have decided to seal windows of all slums that face INS Shikra where President Obama will land on Saturday. One can see the helibase from these slums.

‘Obamabilia’ sell like hotcakes

Bella Jaisinghani | TNN

Mumbai: Barack Obama's political image may be taking a battering in the US, but in India his sheen is yet to wear off.

Just a day before his visit, the Mumbai fan base continues to grow, and shops are stocking up on Obama memorabilia, that seem to be selling like hotcakes.

On the streets of Colaba, the ubiquitous Che Guevara T-shirts are now competing with Obama apparel. For the first time, fashion brand Tantra—its shirts are popular with the youth—has decided to sell merchandise related to a political figure. It has hit the right note with the Obama T-shirt given that five-odd pieces are being picked up every day by Indians as well as foreigners.

And Obamamania is not re-



WOODEN EXPRESSION: Obama sits pretty on a specially designed chair

stricted to south Mumbai. A popular Versova store, for instance, has ordered a fresh consignment

of Obama chairs, wallets and handbags to meet the demand that has escalated in the run-up to the presidential visit. “We had launched the Obama series over a year ago,” says Hinesh Jethwani of Indian Hippy, the brand behind these products. Each item is individually hand-painted by former poster artists of the Hindi film industry who are mostly out of work these days. As a sort of consolation prize for dejected Mumbai-kars who will be unable to meet the president, Jethwani is offering to prepare custom-made portraits with Obama by their side.

The artists are also planning to create a massive 30-ft-long storyboard narrating Obama's milestones through his emergence in public life. This will probably be sold to a collector or a museum in the United States.

US & Indian security agencies work together in mock drills

Times News Network | TNN

Mumbai: The Mumbai police and US security officials conducted an extensive mock drill on Thursday in preparation for US President Barack Obama's two-day visit to the city.

Four US Navy and Air Force helicopters conducted trial flights between Mumbai airport and INS Shikra. The security drills will also be conducted on Friday, said Mumbai police commissioner, Sanjeev Dayal.

“The joint drill saw several teams including the Quick Response Team, Force One, the the Indian Air Force, NSG commandos and US security agencies working together. They were conducted near the Taj, St Xavier's College, Mani Bhavan and other places that Obama will be visiting,” said an official.

A similar exercise was conducted on all roads that the presidential convoy is likely to pass through.

Meanwhile in New Delhi, US secret service agents and their Indian counterparts



Hemant Shirodkar

PREPARING FOR AIR FORCE ONE

will be scanning the sewer network and manholes near all venues and routes being used by delegates to reach different destinations.

The US advance security team, which is stationed in Delhi, has identified six types of threat, including those from sewer lines, that have to be dealt with during Obama's visit.

“Sewer lines are being checked thoroughly. Besides, the security paraphernalia is already in place to deal with any kind of threat,” said an official, adding US secu-

rity personnel are being engaged at every stage.

Sources said that 13 aircraft carrying over 500 American security personnel, 25 bulletproof cars and sophisticated security and communication gadgets have already arrived in India. They have been stationed both in Mumbai and Delhi, said senior officials

It is also learned that once Obama arrives at INS Shikra, a Lincoln Continental—the presidential limousine—will take him to the Taj.

ing in Colaba will be allowed to access buildings via Chhatrapati Shivaji Marg,” said Vivek Phansalkar, joint commissioner of police (traffic). He added that road restrictions may be changed at the last minute. “We have asked residents staying near the Taj to collect their passes. Colaba Causeway will remain open, but no vehicle can be parked there,” he added.

It's Chavan's call, says MEA

From, P 1

Last week, Folmsbee wrote letters to Chavan, Bhujbal, R R Patil, chief secretary J P Dange, additional chief secretary Chandra Iyengar and protocol secretary Sumit Mullick, inviting them for an event on November 6 at the Taj where Obama is expected to commemorate the 26/11 terrorist attacks. “President Barack Obama will make a brief statement to commemorate the tragic attacks on November 26, 2008...Kindly attend the event...For security reasons, bring his letter, along with a photo identify card, RSVP to protocol adviser,” Folmsbee said in the one-page letter. The US consul general asked them to fill up a form with details like nationality, passport and PAN numbers and submit it to the consulate before November 2.

Patil and Iyengar have declined to attend the event on the grounds that the tone of the invitation and request for personal details was inappropriate. The home department felt the right place for paying tribute to the martyrs was the police memorial. Another grouse was that the invitees did not have any active role in the event. “We were shocked when we received the communication. It was inappropriate for the consulate to ask the CM to submit these details, and that too in his own state,” the bureaucrat said.

Mullick wrote to the ministry of external affairs in New Delhi, asking chief protocol officer Sunil Lal whether the chief minister and other invitees should attend the event. The MEA threw the ball back into Chavan's court. “It's a private event organized by the US consulate,” the bureaucrat said. “The MEA asked Chavan to take a decision at his level.” The state feels Chavan should give the event a miss. “Folmsbee personally called on Bhujbal and invited him to the event. Bhujbal's decision will be taken after consulting the chief minister,” said an official.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

CELEBRATING THE TRIUMPH OF GOOD OVER EVIL.

It all started as a way to celebrate Lord Rama's return on vanquishing Ravana. And centuries later, it still gives us a reason to light up the darkness with a phulihadi, burst our worries with a rassi bomb and blast away our inhibitions on a rocket. The Times of India wishes you a Happy Diwali.