

THE TIMES OF INDIA

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

INDIAN MOST TRUSTED NEWS BRAND

PRICE: 7.00 ALONG WITH THE ECONOMIC TIMES OR MAHARASHTRA TIMES*

HC seeks NGO's expertise in regulation of strays in Navi Mum soc

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Mumbai: Bombay high court on Monday added the Non Governmental Organisation (NGO, Welfare of Stray Dogs (WSD), as a party to a petition, to assist and lend its expertise in handling technical and legal aspects related to stray dogs in and around Seawoods Estate, and to help evolve a mechanism on their care, given the rise in their numbers.

The HC roped in WSD in a petition filed last year by few residents against management of an upscale residential complex in Navi Mumbai



A petition was filed against management of the soc over feeding of stray dogs

-Seawood Estate Limited (SEL)-over feeding of stray dogs in the society premises.

The residents, including senior citizens, who feed strays, in their petition sought or-

ders to the Navi Mumbai Municipal corporation (NNMC) and Cidco "to identify and confirm seven feeding stations" within the Seawoods Estates, and a "proactive approach" from the State towards implementation of animal protection laws.

The HC bench of Justices Gautam Patel and SG Dige said WSD has been working for decades in the field, it has worked on neutering, vaccinating, feeding of stray dogs and coordinates with local civic bodies in its work. Observing, "it is a matter of social concern," the HC also that senior counsel Zal Anshyarujl-

na and Shiraz Rustomjee may be requested to appear for WSD in the matter. In December 2021 the HC had restrained the housing society from taking any coercive steps against the petitioners over non-payment of fines. The HC at the time had also appointed advocate Nausher Kohli as an amicus (an impartial adviser to the court) to help argue the law and policy.

On Monday, lawyer for the petitioners, Siddh Vidya said some of them are senior citizens, and the society had issued notice to prevent them from having "domestic help, dog walkers, car washers."

last August. She said a notice was sent to two residents over unpaid dues in which it warned them of restrictions as mentioned in a 'resident's handbook'.

The HC asked the society lawyer Aditya Pratap, "by what law can you stop such services." Pratap said the society has not cut their water or power supply. He also said the notice was not sent through him and he was not given a copy Justice Patel said. "When court says 'no coercive action' it means no coercive action."

Justice Patel after reading the notice, orally said to the

society lawyer, "The Society is acting as if the resident's handbook is the Constitution of India. We will rubbish your handbook so fast, it is not funny."

Expressing its disapproval over six points in the handbook including denial of use of SEL's common facility, denial of renewal of passes for maids, drivers, maintenance staff or for major maintenance of flat, denial of plumber, electrician, carpenter or mason, the HC asked Vidya a one page affidavit of the residents grievance within a week and gave time to Pratap to reply thereafter.