The strategic location of Raj Bhavan exposes the estate to the strong onslaught of the elements from three sides. Therefore, many buildings in the heritage zone have suffered extensive wear. Buildings such as Jal Bhushan, Jal Kiran and Darbar Hall had outlived their lifespan. Until now, renovation work on these buildings had been done in a piecemeal manner as and when the need arose.

However, of late, after taking stock of the condition of the buildings with officials of the Public Works Department and conservation architects, it was decided to strengthen and, in some cases, also reconstruct some buildings in the Raj Bhavan complex – albeit without disturbing the heritage elements to the extent possible.

THANK YOU
Shri CH. Vidyasagar Rao and Smt CH. Vinodha
CONTENTS

4 FOREWORD
A note from Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao on the history and renovation of the Raj Bhavan estate.

8 JAL CHINTAN
A renovated and beautified bungalow in a fine example of Warli-style paintings depicting famed city attractions.

14 JAL KIRAN
A two-storey bungalow, Jal Kiran has been renovated to include the finest of accents and furnishings.

20 DARBAR HALL
The official residence of the Governor, Darbar Hall is now set to acquire a new avatar.

26 JAL BHUSHAN
The official residence of the Governor, the bungalow is now set to acquire a new look.

30 JAL SAGAR
A five-storey guest house, Jal Sagar has been beautified with Warli-style paintings depicting the history and heritage of Maharashtra.

32 THE SECRETARIAT
The official residence of the Secretary to the Governor, the Secretariat is now set to acquire a new look.

34 RAJ BHAVAN BUNKER
A bunker situated in a fine example of Warli-style paintings depicting the history and heritage of Maharashtra.

40 MONUMENTAL FLAG POST
A monumental plaque and national flag post have been erected at the exact spot where the official ceremony of the formation of the State of Maharashtra took place on May 1, 1960.

48 SUNRISE GALLERY
A new gallery has been created to enjoy the sunrise view over the horizon of the bustling city of Mumbai.

54 GREEN RAJ BHAVANS
A series of green initiatives have been taken up by the Governor on all three Raj Bhavans of Maharashtra – all contributing their bit to the creation of a sustainable earth.

66 SUNSET POINT
Sunset Point in the western sea front of Raj Bhavan promontory is a beautiful setting for witnessing magnificent sunsets.

70 RAJ BHAVAN OUTER WALL
The entire outer wall of the Raj Bhavan estate has been beautified with Warli-style paintings depicting the history and heritage of Maharashtra.

72 RAJ BHAVAN OUTER WALL
A new multi-storey block has been beautified with Warli-style paintings depicting the history and heritage of Maharashtra.

80 TWIN CANONS
Two identical cannons lying neglected in the foothills of the Raj Bhavan promontory have been restored for exhibit.

88 SUNSET LAWN
The Sunset Lawn, located in front of Jal Bhushan, has been turned into a large green paradise with an attractive waterbody.

90 DEVI TEMPLE
A new look has been given to the Devi Temple and the adjoining Mhasoba shrine in the Raj Bhavan complex.

104 MONUMENTAL FLAG POST
A monumental plaque and national flag post have been erected at the exact spot where the official ceremony of the formation of the State of Maharashtra took place on May 1, 1960.

112 JAL KIRAN
A two-storey bungalow, Jal Kiran has been renovated to include the finest of accents and furnishings.

114 THE SECRETARIAT
The official residence of the Secretary to the Governor, the Secretariat is now set to acquire a new avatar.

120 JAL SAGAR
A five-storey guest house, Jal Sagar has been beautified with Warli-style paintings depicting the history and heritage of Maharashtra.

124 JAL CHINTAN
A renovated and beautified bungalow in a fine example of Warli-style paintings depicting famed city attractions.

132 JAL KIRAN
A two-storey bungalow, Jal Kiran has been renovated to include the finest of accents and furnishings.

136 DARBAR HALL
The official residence of the Governor, Darbar Hall is now set to acquire a new avatar.

140 JAL BHUSHAN
The official residence of the Governor, the bungalow is now set to acquire a new look.

144 SUNRISE GALLERY
A new gallery has been created to enjoy the sunrise view over the horizon of the bustling city of Mumbai.

152 GREEN RAJ BHAVANS
A series of green initiatives have been taken up by the Governor on all three Raj Bhavans of Maharashtra – all contributing their bit to the creation of a sustainable earth.

160 SUNSET POINT
Sunset Point in the western sea front of Raj Bhavan promontory is a beautiful setting for witnessing magnificent sunsets.

164 RAJ BHAVAN OUTER WALL
The entire outer wall of the Raj Bhavan estate has been beautified with Warli-style paintings depicting the history and heritage of Maharashtra.

168 TWIN CANONS
Two identical cannons lying neglected in the foothills of the Raj Bhavan promontory have been restored for exhibit.

172 SUNSET LAWN
The Sunset Lawn, located in front of Jal Bhushan, has been turned into a large green paradise with an attractive waterbody.

176 DEVI TEMPLE
A new look has been given to the Devi Temple and the adjoining Mhasoba shrine in the Raj Bhavan complex.

180 MONUMENTAL FLAG POST
A monumental plaque and national flag post have been erected at the exact spot where the official ceremony of the formation of the State of Maharashtra took place on May 1, 1960.
UNVEILING A NEW RAJ BHAVAN

The Raj Bhavan located at Malabar Point in a majestic setting is often regarded as the ‘Queen of Raj Bhavans’ in the country. The Raj Bhavan has served as the office and residence of Governors of Maharashtra from May 1, 1960, the date of the inception of the State. Prior to that, between 1912 – the year India attained independence and 1960 – the Raj Bhavan served as the office and the residence of Governors of the erstwhile and bilingual State of Bombay.

HISTORY

According to the book Raj Bhavans of Maharashtra authored by well-known historian Shri Sadashiv Gorakshkar, Government House, as Raj Bhavan was known in the pre-Independence period, shifted to its present address in Malabar Hill in the year 1885. Raj Bhavan thus served as the official residence of British Governors of Bombay from that year. Prior to 1885, the Raj Bhavan complex served as the occasional residence, i.e. Summer Time Residence, and prior to 1810, as Hunting Lodge of the Governors appointed by the British East India Company.

The present Raj Bhavan complex consists of seven bungalows situated almost in a circle around the southern tip of the central access road. These buildings are [Jal Sabhagriha or Darbar Hall,] [Jal Bhushan – the Governors Residence], [Jal Laxan – the Presidential Suite], [Jal Kiran – the guest house adjacent to Jal Laxan], [Jal Chintan also known as Point Bungalow], [Jal Vihar or Banquet Hall] and [Jal Pujan or Bay Bungalow].

Some of these buildings had been standing even before 1885. The Banquet Hall or [Jal Vihar], for instance, was expanded to the present size sometime between 1860 and 1879. [Jal Laxan and Jal Bhushan have a history of almost 120 years!]

RESTORATION, RENOVATION AND METAMORPHOSIS

Because of the strategic location of the Raj Bhavan, which exposes the complex to the strong onslaught of the elements from three sides, many buildings in the heritage zone had suffered extensive wear and needed urgent attention. Buildings like [Jal Bhushan], [Jal Kiran] and [Darbar Hall] had outlived their lifespan. Until now, the renovation work of these buildings had been done in patches and pieces – as and when the need arose.

Having taken stock of all the buildings with conservation architects and officials of the Public Works Department, it was decided to strengthen, and in some cases, reconstruct some of the buildings in the Raj Bhavan complex without disturbing the heritage element to the extent possible. This required considerable planning and meticulous execution.

One of the oldest buildings, the [Jal Chintan], popularly known as Point Bungalow was the first to undergo a complete makeover.

[Jal Kiran, the non-heritage guest house which was in a shabby state, has now been upgraded and transformed into a VVIP guest house where the Hon’ble President and Hon’ble Prime Minister of India will be accommodated during their visits to Mumbai. A beautiful sea-facing gallery is the newest addition to the bungalow.]

DARBAR HALL

The most prominent building in the Raj Bhavan is the [Jal Sabhagriha], known more popularly as Darbar Hall. The old Darbar Hall, built in 1912, served as the venue for swearing-in ceremonies, investitures, official events and cultural programmes. With a seating capacity of only 120, the hall was proving grossly inadequate for hosting programmes such as swearing-in ceremonies. Its structural framework had also deteriorated. A minor fire had also erupted some years ago. Finally, the hall was demolished in December 2018 and it was decided that a new Darbar Hall, with a seating capacity of 850, would be constructed at the same site. It would, additionally, also have a passage and a sea-facing balcony.

BUNKER AND LAWN

One of the memorable events of my tenure as Governor has been the discovery of the underground British-era bunker in Raj Bhavan. The bunker, when discovered, had no rooms with an area of about 6 ft. The process of restoring the bunker and creating a modern museum using 3-D holographic projection technology has already commenced. It is my fervent desire to open the bunker for citizens at the earliest.

JAL BHUSHAN

According to history, [Jal Bhushan], the Governor’s residence and office, had developed around the original ‘Pretty Cottage’ built next to the ruins of a Shiva temple by Mountstuart Elphinstone sometime in 1820. Since then the building underwent several alterations, renovations and even reconstruction to suit the requirements of its occupants. It has been recorded that over the years, the bungalow had evolved with no claims to cohesive planning and standing as a non-engineering structure.
One and a half years ago, when I was in Chennai holding additional charge as Governor of Tamil Nadu, there were heavy rains in Mumbai. A short circuit sparked a fire on the first floor of Jal Bhushan. Within no time, the fire destroyed the decoration of furniture and fixtures in my residence. A structural audit was immediately conducted and a decision was taken to entirely rebuild Jal Bhushan.

The proposed Jal Bhushan is being designed with the same footprint and height, maintaining the existing architectural character of the Raj Bhavan complex.

A structural audit of Jal Bhushan, the office-cum-residence of the Governor of Maharashtra in Raj Bhavan, was conducted in the year 2008. The audit report concluded that the building had outlived its lifespan and might not be safe anymore. However, in view of the serious constraint of a suitable alternative bungalow for the accommodation of the Governor, many other activities such as restoration of the war bunker belonging to the British era, installation of the 150 ft monumental flag post close to where the official ceremony of the State's formation had taken place, removal of cannons lying in an abandoned state, were also carried out.

A structural audit of Jal Bhushan, the office-cum-residence of the Governor of Maharashtra in Raj Bhavan, was conducted in the year 2008. The audit report concluded that the building had outlived its lifespan and might not be safe anymore. However, in view of the serious constraint of a suitable alternative bungalow for the accommodation of the Governor, many other activities such as restoration of the war bunker belonging to the British era, installation of the 150 ft monumental flag post close to where the official ceremony of the State's formation had taken place, removal of cannons lying in an abandoned state, were also carried out.

The reconstruction of some heritage buildings in Raj Bhavan is, in a sense, preparation for the next two centuries, if not more. I would like to humbly state that this period will be marked as a significant one in the annals of the Raj Bhavan's history.

The report of two other important buildings in the Raj Bhavan estate – the Secretariat and the Darbar Hall or Jal Sabhagriha, which served as the venue for important functions and ceremonies for almost a century – was similar. Both Jal Bhushan and Darbar Hall required demolition and reconstruction. However, the Governor’s temporary residence, is now being turned into the office of the Governor. The newly-built garage for cars has temporarily been converted into an office space to accommodate the Governor’s Secretariat.

While carrying out all these operations, utmost care is being taken to conserve the heritage of the estate. During this period, under the guidance of the Governor, many other activities such as restoration of the war bunker belonging to the British era, installation of the 150 ft monumental flag post close to where the official ceremony of the State’s formation had taken place, removal of cannons lying in an abandoned state, were also carried out.

The reconstruction of some heritage buildings in Raj Bhavan is, in a sense, preparation for the next two centuries, if not more. I would like to humbly state that this period will be marked as a significant one in the annals of the Raj Bhavan’s history.

The report of two other important buildings in the Raj Bhavan estate – the Secretariat and the Darbar Hall or Jal Sabhagriha, which served as the venue for important functions and ceremonies for almost a century – was similar. Both Jal Bhushan and Darbar Hall required demolition and reconstruction. However, the Governor’s temporary residence, is now being turned into the office of the Governor. The newly-built garage for cars has temporarily been converted into an office space to accommodate the Governor’s Secretariat.

While carrying out all these operations, utmost care is being taken to conserve the heritage of the estate. During this period, under the guidance of the Governor, many other activities such as restoration of the war bunker belonging to the British era, installation of the 150 ft monumental flag post close to where the official ceremony of the State’s formation had taken place, removal of cannons lying in an abandoned state, were also carried out.

The reconstruction of some heritage buildings in Raj Bhavan is, in a sense, preparation for the next two centuries, if not more. I would like to humbly state that this period will be marked as a significant one in the annals of the Raj Bhavan’s history.

The report of two other important buildings in the Raj Bhavan estate – the Secretariat and the Darbar Hall or Jal Sabhagriha, which served as the venue for important functions and ceremonies for almost a century – was similar. Both Jal Bhushan and Darbar Hall required demolition and reconstruction. However, the Governor’s temporary residence, is now being turned into the office of the Governor. The newly-built garage for cars has temporarily been converted into an office space to accommodate the Governor’s Secretariat.

While carrying out all these operations, utmost care is being taken to conserve the heritage of the estate. During this period, under the guidance of the Governor, many other activities such as restoration of the war bunker belonging to the British era, installation of the 150 ft monumental flag post close to where the official ceremony of the State’s formation had taken place, removal of cannons lying in an abandoned state, were also carried out.

The reconstruction of some heritage buildings in Raj Bhavan is, in a sense, preparation for the next two centuries, if not more. I would like to humbly state that this period will be marked as a significant one in the annals of the Raj Bhavan’s history.
THE NEW LOOK JAL CHHATRAS
At the cliff on the southern edge of the Mumbai Raj Bhavan estate, its plinth clinging into the escarpment, Jal Chintan is the heritage bungalow from where one can watch waves crash and team against the dark rocks below.

The guest house of visiting dignitaries and popularly known as Point Bungalow, Jal Chintan is today the residence of the Governor of Maharashtra – until a new Jal Bhushan is constructed and furnished.

Strategically guarding the bay but buffeted by the harsh, salt-laden winds of the Arabian Sea from three sides, Jal Chintan would often need renovation. The bungalow was revamped in 1985 and then again in 1996. The most recent one, completed in April 2018 under the aegis of Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao, while strengthening its structural members, has methodically preserved its heritage features. With new flooring, picture windows, a tiled courtyard and a grass-paved walkway leading up to it, Jal Chintan makes a pretty picture.

Standing at the spot where a small guard house for sepoys existed as early as in 1710, it is close to the ancient and mystical Shri Gundi or magic rock formation, reputed to have powers to absolve the sins of those who passed through its fissure.

Years later, it came to be called the Hunting Lodge as it was the starting point of the Bombay Bobbery Hunt – an infamous European diversion associated with hunting dogs until 1810. Thereafter, in the last century it was identified as Signal’s House and then as Point Bungalow. Later, in consonance with the descriptor ‘Jal’ for all bungalows within the precincts of Raj Bhavan, it was rechristened Jal Chintan – a favoured place for contemplation.

Centuries ago, a solitary bungalow at Malabar Point – until Evan Nepean built his cottage, the Tiled Bungalow, next to it – Jal Chintan continues to be a sanctuary of calm, from where one can view the skyline of the bustling Marine Drive and the 1875-built Prongs Reef Lighthouse in the southernmost point of the city.

JAL CHINTAN

THE NEW OLD-WORLD CHARM

With picture windows, a tiled courtyard and a flower-encased waterbody in the front lawn, Jal Chintan makes a pretty picture.
Weathered by coastal erosive forces, the old facade of Jal Chintan (this page) required fortifications and a new look (facing page).
Jal Kiran, the guest house for VVIPs and their accompanying staff, stands in pride in its new avatar in the Raj Bhavan complex. A non-heritage bungalow, Jal Kiran has now been renovated to include all modern amenities and a grand décor befitting the stature of its distinguished guests.

The two-storey bungalow, which now covers a total carpet area of 10,825 square feet, had only two VVIP suites before its renovation. The number of VVIP suites have now been increased to four – including one each for the President and the Prime Minister. These suites comprise a meeting hall, a drawing room and a balcony.

The main objective behind the renovation of Jal Kiran has been to provide the best of comforts and a feeling of home away from home to VIP guests of the Governor of Maharashtra.

The renovation of Jal Kiran by well-known architectural firm Structwel has meticulously ensured that guests enjoy beautiful aesthetics as well as comfort and luxury. Adorned with the finest of accents and furnishings, the bungalow has also been structured with Makrana marble flooring with inlay work by the best of skilled artisans from Agra.
The renovated Jal Kiran bungalow has been spruced up with the finest of accents and furnishings to provide the best of comforts to VIP guests and has also been structured with Makrana marble flooring with inlay work by skilled artisans from Agra.

The earlier facade of Jal Kiran (left and inset) has been reinvented and today wears a modern look.
ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING OF THE PROPOSED JAL SABHAGRIHA / DARBAR HALL
Witness to momentous events over the decades, the Darbar Hall of Mumbai Raj Bhavan is now set to acquire a larger and new avatar.

The decision to construct a new building was taken following a structural audit by the Public Works Department advising immediate reconstruction. A century of exposure to the strong and salty winds of the Arabian Sea had led to a loss in the structural load-bearing capacity of its reinforcement members – thereby necessitating a rebuild of the 1911 George Wittet design.

Formally known as Jal Sabhagriha, the rectangular-plan Darbar Hall had, over the years, been the venue of notable occasions such as swearing-in ceremonies of governors, chief ministers and other ministers of Maharashtra, chief justices of the Bombay High Court, sheriffs of Mumbai, constitutional functionaries such as Lokayukta and Chief Information Commissioner, felicitation of litterateurs and artistes, police investiture ceremonies and cultural programmes in honour of members of the diplomatic corps.

The new building, to be reconstructed under the guidance of Consulting Conservation Architect Abha Narain Lambah, while retaining the historical features of the earlier Grade II heritage structure, will have more seating space, a first-floor balcony overlooking the interior hall, Edwardian style neo-classical interiors, Dorman windows, a mini-theatre to accommodate 25 guests and a sea-facing, sunset-viewing deck.

The hall, whose design focus is on ensuring a ‘green’ building, will be spread over an area of 2,150 square metres between Jal Bhushan and the Governor’s Secretariat.

It will now have a seating capacity of 850, which is 600 more than the previous hall’s capacity of 250 guests. With passages and balconies and graced with vintage chandeliers of the earlier hall, the new Jal Sabhagriha has been visualised as one with coastal architectural elements – in perfect tune with its setting.
The proposed Darbar Hall (facing page) will retain features of the earlier structure (this page).
Said to be the place where famous American writer and humorist Mark Twain lunched with British Governor Lord Sandhurst in 1896, Jal Bhushan has always been the jewel in the crown of the Mumbai Raj Bhavan estate. The official residence-cum-office of the Governor since 1885, the bungalow which evolved around a pretty cottage built around 1820, is now set to acquire a new incarnation.

Having completed its lifespan and pronounced as structurally unsafe, Jal Bhushan will soon be demolished for a new building that will nonetheless retain many distinctive features of the existing heritage structure. The first floor of the bungalow which houses the Governor’s residence will not only be structurally reinforced with modern building technology but also boast of grandiose contemporary decor and an unhindered view of the ocean and horizon.
The Governor’s office-cum-residence Jal Bhushan (this page) will soon reincarnate in a new avatar proposed in the architectural drawings (facing page).
Formally inaugurated by Smt. CH. Vinodha in the presence of Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao on December 13, 2017, Jal Sagar, the newest guest house of the Raj Bhavan estate, offers stunning views of sunrises and sunsets. Comprising four VIP suites, its architecture not only blends with the other buildings of the heritage precinct, its portico has also been structured to resemble that of Jal Vihar or Banquet Hall.
The proposed Secretariat building (facing page) will sport a modern, reinvented look which includes a pitched roof while retaining features of the old Secretariat building (right). The Secretariat has temporarily been shifted to the garage building (top inset).
The British-era bunker discovered below the Raj Bhavan complex in 2016 is all set to be reincarnated as a museum for public viewing. The thematic museum, a pet project of Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao, will be spread over 15,000 square feet and comprise virtual reality booths in which visitors can time travel to the 19th century, when the bunker might have been used to fire cannons at approaching enemy ships.

Supervised by a committee comprising Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya Director General Dr Sabayachi Mukherjee, Secretary to the Governor Vignanpurd Reddy, Officer on Special Duty Vasant Salunke, Sir J J School of Architecture Dean Rajeev Mishra, Graphic Designer Sunderrajan and Public Works Department Executive Engineer, the museum would transport the viewer to a bygone era. Visitors can witness Maharashtra’s contribution to the freedom movement, crisscross the forts of Maharashtra and even get a feel of cannon-firing.

The new avatar of the coastal bunker which has an incredibly interesting history will expectedly be the jewel in the crown of Mumbai destinations. Its adaptive reuse as a museum will not only conserve an interesting piece of urban archaeology but also shed light on Mumbai’s socio-economic significance as the seat of power of the Bombay Presidency and the political shifts that led to Indian independence. Structurally strengthened through waterproofing, electrification, air-conditioning and allied work, the modern museum will use 3-D holographic projection technology to tell its story.

It is the Governor’s curiosity that was the spark behind the idea of a museum. Soon after taking up office, the Governor would learn about the probable existence of an underground bunker from retired Raj Bhavan staff. Curiosity to ascertain the existence of the bunker led to an extensive exploration starting with the east end of the bunker, which was completely concealed by a wall. The wall was brought down, confirming the existence of the bunker. The Governor, accompanied by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, visited it on August 16, 2016.

Closed for at least six decades, the bunker opens with a 20-ft tall gate resembling a fort and has a ramp on its west end, opposite the Darbar Hall. Long passages and 13 small- to medium-size rooms with names such as Shell Store, Gun Shell, Cartridge Store, Shell Lift, Pump, Central Artillery Store, Workshop and more were found. The gangway also had scores of lamp recesses, a conventional drainage system and inlets for fresh air and light.

Assumptions and theories have been made as to why the British built such a complex underground system below the Raj Bhavan. According to the History of Raj Bhavans in Maharashtra, until 1885, it was the summer residence of British Governors when Lord Reay turned it into a permanent residence, and it came to be known as Government House. In his report on Raj Bhavan Bunker (February 2017), Conservation Architect Vikas Dilawari observes: “Amongst all the British Governors who stayed in the Raj Bhavan, Colonel G. S. Clarke was the only Governor with a military background. He served as Governor during the period of 1907-1913 i.e. during the start of World War I.” He further notes that in the year 1876, while serving as secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee, Clarke had published Fortification: Its Past Achievement, Recent Development and Future Progress. According to Dilawari, the book was influential in shaping the British view of military fortification.
RAJ BHAVAN BUNKER

Governor Dr. Vidyasagar Rao and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis (left) inspect the many areas of the underground bunker soon after it was discovered in 2016.

The bunker being structurally strengthened into a museum through waterproofing, electrification, air-conditioning and allied work.
Site of the official ceremony of the formation of the State of Maharashtra

The official ceremony to mark the formation of the State of Maharashtra was held at this site in Raj Bhavan at the stroke of midnight connecting April 30th and May 1st, 1960. Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru unveiled the map of Maharashtra in the presence of Governor Shri. Sri Pratap and Chief Minister-designate Shri. Yashwantrao Chavan.

This plaque was unveiled on May 1, 2016 in the presence of Governor Shri. Cta. Vinayakrao Rau and Chief Minister Shri. Devendra Fadnavis.

PLAQUE COMMEMORATING THE FORMATION CEREMONY OF THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA
Erected at the exact place where the formation of the State of Maharashtra was declared on May 1, 1960, both the constituents are the brainchild of Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao. For a long time, it had been assumed that the official ceremony of the State’s formation – in the presence of first Indian Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Maharashtra’s first Governor Sri Prakasa and first Chief Minister V. V. Deshpande – had taken place either in Jal Sabhagriha or Jal Vihar. However, when Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao learnt from retired Raj Bhavan officials that the historic unveiling of the map of Samyukta Maharashtra had been held in an open area in the estate, archival records were examined, and the accurate location identified. In a happy coincidence, the spot was found to be the same place that the Governor had pinpointed for clearing of undergrowth a few days earlier. Surrounded by a wild growth of vegetation, the place then lay undefined, sans any sign distinguishing its significance.

A memorial with a plaque depicting the map of Samyukta Maharashtra and a 150-feet-high flag post for the Indian Tricolour, was thereafter constructed and unveiled on May 1, 2016, on the 56th anniversary of the formation of Maharashtra. Lokadhara, as the momentous occasion was named, celebrated the culture of the State and was attended by a host of dignitaries – Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Union Minister for Railways Suresh Prabhu, Union Minister of State for Clean Energy and Coal Piyush Goyal, State Cabinet Ministers Sudhir Mungantiwar, Vinod Tawde and Ramdas Kadam, Chairman of the Maharashtra Legislative Council Ramraje Niki Nimbalkar, Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Haribhau Bagde, President of the Nationalist Congress Party Sharad Pawar, Chief Justice of Bombay High Court Justice D H Waghela, Mumbai Mayor Snehal Ambekar, Bollywood star Aamir Khan and members of the diplomatic community.
A plaque commemorating the formation of Maharashtra was unveiled in the presence of dignitaries on May 1, 2016, at the exact spot where the map of Samyukta Maharashtra was first unveiled on May 1, 1960.

Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru unveils the map of Samyukta Maharashtra in the presence of Maharashtra Governor Dr. Prakasa and Chief Minister Yashwantrao Chavan during the official ceremony at the Raj Bhavan complex on May 1, 1960.
The memorial plaque and flag post park is very favored by Governor Dr. Vidyasagar Rao for interacting with visitors to the Mumbai Raj Bhavan (facing page and this page).
For long decades, sunrise in the south of Mumbai would be best enjoyed from a few select points on the Chowpatty Beach. Until, on the International Day of Yoga in 2015, Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao put the spotlight on what is undoubtedly the finest spot from where to enjoy the sun rising over the horizon of this lively and energetic alpha city.

Located on the Raj Bhavan promontory, overlooking the majestic Arabian Sea and the iconic Marine Drive, Sunrise Gallery – as it came to be named – was opened for the public to enjoy sunrise and practice yoga in the serene and verdant environs of the heritage premises.

While the quiet, except for the rare call of seagulls and the chirping of birds, can lead one to doubt if it is the heart of Mumbai city, the stunning view of the sunrise and its beautiful palette defining the skyline of Queen’s Necklace is enough to write off all doubts.

With flowering shrubs and a thick foliage of trees serving as the backdrop, the sunrise deck not only accentuates the beauty of Mumbai but also celebrates Mumbai’s Raj Bhavan as a Lok Bhavan. Much like how the rising sun devours darkness by spreading light, Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao’s vision has also transformed the inaccessible ‘Queen of Raj Bhavans’ into a much-favoured tourist attraction – a place to witness glory and a magnificent heritage. Every day, except on public holidays, twenty visitors accompanied by Raj Bhavan staff, enjoy the sun rise from the deck.

Sunrise Gallery, built over a maintenance room that houses a transformer, is today a must-visit destination not only for the people of Mumbai but also for those who visit the city from India and abroad.

Well-appointed with benches to sit and soak in the serenity, while being soothed by the salty breeze of the Arabian Sea, the Gallery also houses of a mini pavilion flanked by figures of two seated lions and adorned with intricate carvings.

Tribal art on the walls of the maintenance room also adds to the overall ambience. The prospect of spotting peacocks on the lower drive also adds to the experience.

Sunrise Gallery A Deck for Sunrises
Well appointed with a rose pavilion, chromepolished benches and yoga mats for visiting enthusiasts, the Sunrise Gallery is one of the finest spots in Mumbai to watch the sun rise over the Arabian Sea and admire the Hand Sculpture (top right) installed at the rocky seashore below.
TWIN CANNONS ON THE HELIPAD LAWNS OF RAJ BHAVAN
The discovery of two identical cannons in the Mumbai Raj Bhavan estate has further added to its historicity. Dating to the pre-World War I era, the cannons – 4.7 metre in length and 1.15 metre in diameter – were found under mud, 25 metres apart, in the foothills of the Raj Bhavan promontory.

The cannons, believed to have belonged to the battery near the coast as part of the defence of Bombay Castle from naval attacks, were first spotted by Raj Bhavan staff members during a tree plantation drive. On November 3, 2018, in a 12-hour operation witnessed by Governor C. Vidyasagar Rao, cranes extricated the TWIN CANNONS ancient weaponry that lay buried underground over the passage of time. The turrets, each weighing 22 tonnes, were then lifted on to the Helipad Lawn. Currently undergoing restoration measures, they will soon be installed in front of Jal Vihar, the monumental banquet hall.

Given the Governor’s fondness for restoring and preserving historical relics, the Indian Navy has been assigned with the task of enumerating technical details and retrieving archival records relating to the cannons. The cannons are the second major find – after the discovery of a British-era bunker – since renovation and restoration work was initiated by the Governor in the Raj Bhavan estate.

Governor C. Vidyasagar Rao and Vice President Venkaiah Naidu examine the two identical 22-tonne cannons that were lifted from the foothills of the Raj Bhavan promontory.
TREE PLANTATION IN MUMBAI RAJ BHAVAN
From tree plantation drives in the Mumbai and Nagpur Raj Bhavan estates to recycling of water, solar power, bird restaurants and more, a series of green initiatives taken up by Governor CH. Vidyasagar Rao in all the three Raj Bhavans of Maharashtra are today contributing their bit to the creation of a sustainable earth.

The 1-megawatt solar power plant at the Pune Raj Bhavan, for example, not only meets the energy requirements of all three Raj Bhavans, but also generates 8.50 lakh surplus units of power that is contributed to the common grid. Home to a wide variety of flora, both the Mumbai and Nagpur Raj Bhavan estates also thrive under the care of the Governor.

According to data from the first GPS-based tree census, the tree count in Mumbai’s Raj Bhavan had increased from 2,994 in 2008 to 5,590 in February 2015. A tree plantation drive organised by Dr Nanasaheb Dharmadhikari Pratishthan and launched by the Governor on July 8, 2015 with a mango sapling, has nurtured thousands of trees in the Raj Bhavan till date – with the estate now boasting of 130 species of trees, five of which are also rare. Following the eradication of an invasive vine and planting of 3,500 new trees by volunteers of the National Service Scheme, even the Nagpur Raj Bhavan today is a verdant paradise – home to a record 1.50 lakh trees.

To ensure optimal use of available water and prevent soil erosion, drip irrigation has been adopted to water plants in the Nagpur, Mumbai and Pune estates. Going a step further, in Mumbai Raj Bhavan, recycled water from the Banganga Sewage Treatment plant is being used to water the lawns and gardens. In the magnificent Biodiversity Park in the Nagpur Raj Bhavan, the Governor has initiated farm ponds and water harvesting structures. The farm ponds not only cater to water requirements for the Biodiversity Park, but also nurture various species of fishfargis and lotus plants.

Other initiatives taken up in the Nagpur Raj Bhavan include an open air platform for feeding birds, a beautiful butterfly garden and a beekeeping project – with 15 boxes for honeybees in the vicinity of the farm ponds. Efforts are also underway to make the Biodiversity Park organic. In this regard, foliage and grass is being used for making vermicompost in all the three Raj Bhavans of the State.
A rose garden project initiated in the Pune Raj Bhavan in 2018 boasts of more than 1,600 varieties of rose blooms (above and right). The Biodiversity Park at Nagpur Raj Bhavan (top) provides a magnificent opportunity for students and teachers to experience nature in its purest form and gain knowledge about flora and fauna.

Adorned with scores of flowering plants, Nagpur Raj Bhavan is not only a treat for the senses but also a unique biodiversity area with a bird restaurant and a beautiful garden.
Farm ponds at the Nagpur Raj Bhavan (left) cater to water requirements for its Biodiversity Park while boxes for honeybees in the vicinity of the ponds comprise a flourishing beekeeping project.

Two pet projects of Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao at the Pune Raj Bhavan are a water conservation project and a solar power plant that meets the energy requirements of all three Raj Bhavan estates in Maharashtra.
Sunset Point, situated in the western sea front of the Raj Bhavan promontory, is a beautiful setting for witnessing magnificent sunsets on the Arabian Sea. Built in the early 1970s, in the lawn behind Jal Bhushan, Sunset Point has now been given a whole new look at the initiative of Governor C. H. Vidyasagar Rao. With an extended, non-skid deck, chrome-polished benches and a green lawn as the backdrop, it is the perfect composition for relaxation for the Governor and distinguished guests on balmy evenings and the annual Republic Day At Home receptions.
A thoughtful initiative by Governor C. Vidyasagar Rao has today turned the lawn in front of Jal Bhushan into a large, green paradise. Spread over 5,260 square metres – 2,118 square metres more than the earlier 3,142 square metres – the lawn has been uniformly levelled with Korean carpet grass and enhanced with an attractive waterbody.

The lawn has also been equipped with water-saving sprinklers for easy and cost-effective maintenance.

The earlier lawn which sloped towards the seaside has been levelled with 8-9 feet of soil and fortified with a retaining wall. Providentially, the lawn could be renovated by using soil from a construction site in nearby Napean Sea Road. The deal was mutually advantageous, since the real estate could dispose the soil and the Raj Bhavan could reclaim an additional area with very little expenditure.

The courtyard of Jal Bhushan has been extended and levelled into Sunset Lawn, a green spread measuring 5,260 square metres.
Until late 2015, the loveliness of the 47-acre Grade I heritage precinct of Raj Bhavan was the city’s best-kept secret. Its wide sun-kissed pathways, acres of foliage and beautifully-designed structures lay tranquil beyond tall, strictly-guarded gates.

The tranquillity of the place would be broken only once a year, in the month of July – when the gates would open for thousands of devotees wishing to visit the Devi Temple inside the estate for the long-honoured annual jatra. On that day, the noise of religious festivities would merge with the noise of the monsoon in full force.

Since 2015, however, at the initiative of Governor C H. Vidyasagar Rao, the Devi Temple and its adjoining Mhasoba shrine have undergone extensive renovation. The only temple in Mumbai dedicated to a nameless goddess, the faithful have nonetheless composed various names for Devi Temple’s deity – Jal Devi, Sagar Mata, Sri Gundi, Sakalai Devi and more, all pointing to its location right beside the sea.

Situated in a cleft of the Malabar Hill promontory, behind the cluster of buildings that comprise the Raj Bhavan complex, and a minute away from the now-famed Sunrise Gallery, the simple functional temple enshrines a deity that has been worshipped by Mumbai’s fisherfolk through the centuries – even before the arrival of the Portuguese.

Today, as one walks downhill to the shrine, flanked on one side by the gently dancing waters of the sea and on the other by a cliff face with vines, creepers, flowering shrubs and trees, including rocks that are millions of years old, one can clearly fathom why, over the centuries, it has commanded deep piety.
Governor C.Y. Vidyasagar Rao’s many efforts to enhance the magnificence of the Mumbai Raj Bhavan got a boost when the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) came up with a proposal to beautify the entire outer wall of the estate with Warli style paintings. The Governor quickly endorsed the idea to draw paintings on the entire stretch of the wall that runs from its Lower Gate to Teen Batti junction.

Portraying life and the landmarks of Mumbai city, the paintings – drawn by students and artists under the guidance of Artdesh Foundation – not only draw attention to the impressive and historic premises but also offer colour and art to life that is played out along the street every day.

Today, the longest single wall painting in Mumbai, the canvas of Walkeshwar Wall is a superlative accent that has enlivened the ambience of the thoroughfare that leads to the Governor’s bungalow. The art that occupies the six-feet-tall and 1,092-feet-long wall is composed of 69 panels that is spread over an area of 6,000 square feet. Albeit depicting 60 different themes along with famed city attractions such as Ban Ganga, Gateway of India, Taj Mahal Hotel, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Kala Ghoda, Colaba Causeway, Fashion Street, Sassoon Dock, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Bandra-Worli Sea Link and more, the panel nonetheless make up a composite story.

The painting begins with a typical village scene in which crops are grown, harvested and then loaded for sale in the city. Thereafter, the story, told in the simple pictorial language of the Warli tribe, against the archetypal red ochre background, explores Mumbai – from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus to South Mumbai, the suburbs and Navi Mumbai and back again to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus – before returning to the village.

A style of tribal art that uses a set of geometric shapes to symbolise humans and other elements, Warli was chosen to beautify the estate’s outer wall because it originated in Maharashtra and also best exemplifies the fusion of tradition and contemporary – which is emblematic of the present-day Raj Bhavan.
SUNSET LAWN