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Centre for mentally ill at Dahisar upsets local residents

By Sophie Menezes

MUMBAI: The Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation's recently established rehabilitation centre for mentally-ill patients at Dahisar has given rise to a controversy and become a ment provided for these patients cause for concern and anxiety among local residents, particularly women and children.

Says clinical psychologist Meeta Shah, who lives in the neighbourhood, "It is unfair to expose such patients to normal people as it makes them suffer from a complex. Besides, they have a tendency to be careless

regarding their clothing. Considering that our high-rise buildings overlook their rooms, such acts could have an adverse effect on youngsters and children. Moreover, the environshould be spacious, open and environmentally friendly."

The centre's two-storeyed building, which is still under construction, presently houses nine inmates two females, six males and a child in one room. "The incomplete structure lacks proper water supply, electricity, medical facilities and food arrangements, which are prerequisites for any rehabilitation centre, nursing home or hospital," complain members of New Link Road Residents' Association, Dahisar.

cannot be held responsible," they them to their nursing home at Borivli

The residents said they appreciastructure into a nursing home for the aged, alcoholics or drug addicts. Alternately, they insist that the foundation should sell the property and buy more land at cheaper rates at either Mira Road or Naigaon for their mentally-ill patients.

However, psychiatrists Bharat and Smitha Vatwani, who founded the centre, say that such suggestions will remain mere suggestions unless the residents themselves contribute funds for the new centre.

Incidentally, the need for better "The absence of proper security services and support for mentally-ill incidents, for which the mentally ill patients off the streets and brought neighbourhood.

for treatment.

But they felt that the existing facilted the aim of the project but were ities at the Borivli centre could not against its location. They would wel- satisfactorily meet the needs of the come the conversion of the same mentally ill. They then decided to buy a 1,400-sq foot plot from the proceeds of an art exhibition titled, 'Shraddha Samarpan', in 1993. The construction work, which commenced in January 1996, is expected to finish this month.

The nursing home plan was approved by the Brihanmumbai municipal corporation, according to the Vatwanis. The rehab centre will provide for 40 beds — 20 for females on the first floor and 20 for males on the second. The Vatwanis feel the 24-hour water supply from underground and overhead tanks should be adequate.

In addition to the grill work and measures (like a high compound destitutes prompted the Vatwanis to locks on doors at the centre, doctors wall with barbed wire fencing) could launch the project. In the last seven are willing to chain patients who are make residents victims of untoward years, they have picked up nearly 600 likely to cause a problem for the