

# Mumbai Meri Jaan



**Forward This To All - And All Forward - Together**



## Hawker pitches - BMC proposes, Mayor disposes

**B**MC proposed 85,891 hawker pitches in the 24 wards of Mumbai including areas near schools, temples, railways stations, which is not allowed by the Supreme Court.

Many NGOs, citizens' groups have objected to the pitches. Some Corporators like Amey and Shah from Wadala, Parsi Colony in Dadar, have also sent letters to the Municipal Commissioner.

In the BMC's general body meeting, most corporators objected to the proposal. The Mayor therefore directed the corporation to scrap the pitches that have been proposed. The pitches should be allocated after studying the localities, he said.

BMC has given time till 31st January, 2018 for suggestions and objections.

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## AGNI to join PCGT in PIL in Bombay High Court on Maharashtra Bandh

**A**AGNI will join PCGT (Public Concern for Governance Trust) and others who have filed a petition in the Bombay High Court in connection with the recent Maharashtra Bandh called by Prakash Ambedkar's party.

Maharashtra's transport bus corporation suffered a loss of Rs 20 crore, while the railways lost Rs 3.40 crores.

The petition seeks apart from others, compensation for the extensive damage caused to public and private property throughout the State due to the bandh.

In 2003 in a PIL filed by the Late Mr. B. G. Deshmukh, Chairman of AGNI, the Shiv Sena and BJP were both made to deposit with the Maharashtra Government Rs. 20 lacs each by way of exemplary damages caused



due to a forced Bandh called by them on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2003, in a separate fund to be named "30<sup>th</sup> July 2003 Bandh loss compensation fund". Further the High Court declared that calling for and enforcing a **M u m b a i B a n d h** is unconstitutional and therefore should be banned.

In 2009, Mr. Julio Ribeiro of PCGT had filed a PIL in the Bombay High Court and the judges ruled that any political party instigating riots would have to pay for the damages caused to public and private property, including a loss of profit to affected businesses.

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## For quicker services citizens need RTS panel

**Ashutosh Shukla**

**T**here is a sense of deja-vu when it comes to citizens getting delivery of services under Right to Services (RTS) Act as compared to Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The comparison between the two being services received when application was escalated to commission level. A number of citizens managed to get their services the moment they approached the commission - an independent office as compared to appeal-stage office that are part of government — when they did not get the services when applied for. Lately, under RTI too, details are given after reaching the commission level

RTS is a more direct Act and was enacted to ensure that notified services were delivered to eligible citizens on time, while the RTI Act entitles timely information to citizens for attaining transparency and accountability.

Under the RTS Act, a number of people have managed to get services soon after they sought some specific information. In case the service was not delivered on time, the officers providing the service faced action.

"In most cases, citizens have written to us stating that they managed to get services after our intimation for hearing was sent to the officers," said Swadheen Kshatriya, chief of the RTS commission.

Some cases in point are shop licences, which were not given even after the government took several initiatives towards 'ease of doing business'.

Rushi Chavan from Pune did not get an AC shop license certificate. In the first appeal stage, an order was given that services be rendered. The second appeal stage too had a similar response. Chavan, however, did not get the information and officers said that his application **contd. on page 3**

## Students to construct toilets from plastic at Versova beach

**Linah Baliga**

**With more than 50 schools participating in the initiative, specially fabricated eco-bricks will be used for building the structure**

**A**head of the complete ban on plastic bags that State Environment Minister Ramdas Kadam plans on imposing from March 2018, fifty schools from Mumbai are already contributing their bit to the management of plastic waste by constructing a toilet block on Versova beach out of discarded plastic bottles. Special care will also be taken to ensure that no plastic bottles or bags end up on the narrow stretch of the coastline or at a landfill site.

To kick-start this unique initiative, the students from Auxilium Convent (Bandra), Durello Convent, St Anne's High School, St Joseph's High School

Sacred Heart (Vashi), Auxilium Convent (Wadala), Don Bosco (Matunga) and St Joseph's High School (Wadala) among others will be constructing special eco-bricks out of used plastic bottles. The students have already started working it, informed Yolanda Ferreira, in-charge of Eco Club, Auxilium Convent, Bandra.

"In this process of making eco-bricks, wet plastic bags and sharp objects cannot be used. Only thin plastic bags have to be used and inserted inside the bottles in a manner that no air pockets are created. Air pockets



give poor quality eco-bricks which cannot be used for construction. Each eco-brick has to be 500gms (1/2 kg) in weight," informed Ferreira.

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# Swachha Mumbai Abhiyaan

## Mahim residents beautify footpaths with plants to keep hawkers at bay

*Mahim ALM claims that the increasing number of accidents of pedestrians in the area is due to the encroachment of illegal stalls which the BMC should have cleared*

**Steffy Thevar**

Despite Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) repeated efforts to keep hawkers away, Mahim's Advance Locality Management (ALM) has now been forced to come up with an innovative idea of beautifying their footpaths by planting trees, in a bid to achieve the same. The move is aimed at giving pedestrians a free space to walk on the footpaths and also keep illegal shanties from developing. The ALM will come together and plant trees brought in from Andhra Pradesh especially for this plan, which will suit the soil of Mumbai and help keep squatters, who have been occupying the footpath, at bay.

Zameen ALM Secretary, Herman Dias said, "As per the information we have obtained from the Mahim police station through an RTI, from 2008 until December 2016, about 150 accidents have taken place on the footpath stretch on Senapati Bapat Marg, opposite the State government quarters."

An ALM is an identified locality or neighborhood, the residents of which commit themselves to improve the 'Quality of Life' in the locality in close co-operation with the BMC. The residents have sought permission from the BMC's G/North ward office and the police is currently clearing the squatters along with illegal stalls, after which the beautification program will start today. The beautification includes planting of trees and flexi-boards and urging pedestrians to use the



footpath. Dias said, "Hawkers come in at night opposite the Mahim Railway station. This despite the fact that the High Court has ordered the hawkers to stay 150 feet away from the stations." He added that there are at least 10-12 stalls on the road from pole 66 to 93. These stalls include those of mobile shops, cigarette/pan/beedi stalls, a tailoring shop, three sugarcane shops, a cobbler and fruit stalls.

In addition to the illegal encroachments on the footpath, the actual problem is the increased road accidents which has become a major danger for pedestrians. Dias says, "Road accidents have taken place right here due to unavailability of walking space on the footpath, which has resulted in 35 innocent people losing their lives in the 150 accidents recorded. The BMC has so far managed to clear more than 90 per cent squatters and illegal hawkers."

The activist further said that the Government Resolution (GR) passed by the CM and Urban Minister Devendra Fadnavis during the recent conclave at Nagpur, instructs the BMC to remove all stalls from outside the railway stations (whether legal or illegal) which are likely to cause inconvenience to the commuters or pedestrians.

The circular of June 2016 from the DMC pertaining to

## At full stretch to make plastic ban a success

*GREEN DREAM Maha govt forms four teams to study how it can be done, plans stringent action against those flouting law*

**Faisal Malik**

The state has come up with a plan to ensure the ban on plastic bags irrespective of their thickness is a success. The ban is likely to be imposed from March 2018.

The state has formed four teams comprising officials of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board to study the models of Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Karnataka and Shimla, where plastic bags are banned. It also plans to ban 'use and throw' items such as plates and glasses made of thermacol, as they contribute to pollution and clogging of drains, just like plastic carry bags.

While guilty consumers, manufacturers and retailers will have to pay a fine, officials from local civic bodies too may face action for failing to perform their duties, sources said. "We will start with a ban on the use of plastic bottles at all government offices from March, which will then be extended to starred hotels and other places in phases. Later, the government may consider imposing a ban on the manufacture of water bottles," said Satish Gavai, additional chief secretary, environment department.

The decision to impose the ban -- which is in extension to the ban on plastic bags thinner than 50 microns in place after the 2005 deluge -- on manufacture, sale, marketing and trade of plastic was taken by state environment minister Ramdas Kadam. "We will set up a helpline and form citizen committees to report violations," said a senior official.

Removal of Encroachments instructs the Asst. Commissioners (Ward Officers) of all 24 wards to file FIRs against repeat offenders who come back to the spot (footpaths) after action has been taken by the BMC, traffic and police.

Offenders will get two chances -- a fine of Rs5,000 and Rs10,000. The third offence will invite a fine of Rs25,000 with imprisonment which could be up to three to six months and loss of licence, sources said.

"We plan to use 4% funds of the district planning and development committee to subsidise the manufacturing of cloth bags," said the senior official.

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## Versova housing societies, NGOs unite to tackle civic issue

To resolve civic issues by taking them to a larger forum, various societies and non-government organisations from Versova have formed the 'United Citizens of Versova'. The forum is represented by 33 societies and NGOs, from Kapaswadi to Yari Road.

The main problem the group aims to tackle is encroachments on sidewalks and roads.

"Earlier, ALMs and NGOs would work separately. We needed to put more pressure on the civic body so issues such as encroachment, mosquito breeding, potholes, mangrove protection and water supply could be resolved," said chairperson Dr Kanta Mukherjee.

"We are not complaining, but simply bringing the issues to notice so we can work on them together with the authorities," said Pratima Rai, a forum member.

Members said they met with BMC officials to discuss their problems.

Local corporator Rohan Rathod said the civic body started taking regular action against encroachments on the Juhu-Versova Link road and fumigating localities after the meeting was held. "It will, however, take some time to solve the water supply issue," he said.

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## Crap! Swachhta App

Steffy Thevar

With an aim to win brownie points and get the maximum number of complaints cleared, senior officials of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) have been forcing their juniors to follow stringent deadlines. This has led to a conflict between the officials who have been given a target of tackling at least 50 complaints a day in addition to their regular work. With no increase in their manpower and the lack of proper infrastructure, the juniors have begun complaining against their seniors. While a few others, in a bid to win brownie points, have started creating their own list of complaints and fulfilling them to show work is being done as prescribed.

An app which was meant to keep the city clean has actually turned out to be a nightmare for the BMC officials. The 'Swachhta App' was launched



by the Central Government's Urban Development (UD) ministry for addressing complaints related to civic issues. The app empowers citizens who can click pictures and mark the location after which the complaint will be forwarded to the concerned municipal authority. The app pinpoints the exact location of the complaint using geolocation (real world geographic location). As far as Mumbai is concerned, all complaints will be directed to the concerned ward office and the Solid Waste Management (SWM) assistant engineer has to look into it. It does not stop here as the complainant will also get a live feedback from the concerned authority as their complaint is taken care of.

This may all seem easy and convenient on paper. However, the officials who work on ground are facing the brunt for meeting stringent deadlines and have been complaining about the lack of personal time. In case of the BMC, the officials have been asked to resolve at least 50 complaints daily. This is also to ensure that the city can rise up in the upcoming 'Swachh Bharat' survey. An official, on the condition of anonymity said, "We receive feedback on the number of complaints resolved and those wards that have not performed get a bad remark. This activity has been eating into our family time. We get messages on Sundays and also after office hours at mid night, and in case we are late to receive them or the issues we get a back remark. In case we complain about the same to our seniors there is no one to give a proper answer. With no increase in infrastructure or manpower, the government

has given us this extra responsibility. Even though we are ready to respond to complaints, in this case we have to give a follow up too."

While in some wards there are too many complaints to address, there are others that have almost none. Another officer from a different ward said, "In many wards there are quite a few citizens who are unaware of this app and no one has the time or inclination to upload the image and complain about the same. However, in a bid to fulfil our deadlines, we are often forced to put up fake complaints and then resolve them and upload the follow-up image."

According to an internal daily analysis of the complaints of December 17-18, the poor performance wards and their total resolved complaints are – M West (18), L (60), D (96), H East (94), P South (89), R South (99), R Central (83) and T (81). While the top performing wards are – K West (342) and C (308). However, the following day (December 19-20), the complaints in these wards rose and in some cases, rose drastically, with M West recording 35 complaints, L (91),

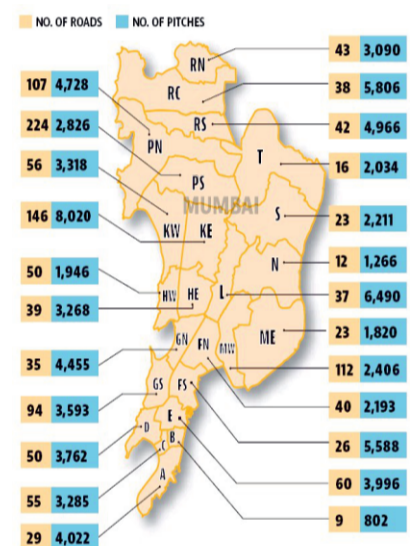
D (92), H East (95), P South (165), R South (191), R Central (117) and T (114). The best performing wards were K West (563) and H West 296.

During the last 'Swachh Bharat' ranking, Mumbai's position dropped from 10 to 29. The assistant commissioners and assistant engineers are complaining that this app is taking a heavy toll on their personal life and so the BMC must increase manpower and machinery required for the task. According to the civic body, till date, 50 thousand people have downloaded the app and about 27,000 complaints have been resolved in total.

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### Wardwise Hawking Pitches

See Editorial



### For quicker services citizens need RTS panel

contd. from page 1 was not available. The moment the case reached the second third appeal (commission) stage, Chavan replied that he had got the certificate.

In two similar cases, authorities did not issue a license, stating that the documents were not proper. However, no such reply was given in writing to the applicants. Only when the RTS commission sent a notice for hearing were the licenses given. In all three cases, applicants said that since they got the service, a third appeal was not needed.

Shailesh Gandhi, former central information commissioner, said, "An average citizen will not pursue it, but the commission should ask for an explanation and penalise officers. After all, the third appeal stage is laborious. Ideally, at this stage if they feel the designated officer has a good case, he should be spared, otherwise they should be penalised to create a fear of the law."

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### AGNI Ward Coordinators

| WARD NAME     | AREAS   | Ward Coordinator                                   | PHONE                                  | email  |
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# Why our metros should be underground

 Pamela Cheema, AGNI Coordinator, S Ward

**W**ith pollution at all-time highs in most Indian metros coupled with vicious traffic snarls, the establishment of rapid and efficient mass transport systems have become an urgent necessity. But the chosen systems of transportation must not destroy the city in the name of development. Pamela Cheema, AGNI Coordinator, S ward, speaks to well-known architect, Nitin Killawala, who is in the vanguard of the movement against elevated Metros in the western suburbs along with many resident associations, NGOs and enlightened citizens.

## Why should we have underground Metros?

Any developed city must have underground Metros, more so a city like Mumbai, where its arterial roads are over-congested and chaotic. An efficient public transport system is one of the major components of making a city smart.

Also, underground Metros are expandable and give ample flexibility to criss-cross the city. This is evident in Metro-3 which will connect Colaba to SEEPZ

via Churchgate - CST - Siddhivinayak. It will also connect both the Airports, etc. Elevated Metros are standalone projects with monstrous structures abutting private and public properties. This is seen in the elevated Metro 1 where its airport station can never be connected to the T2 Terminal although it is just a couple of hundred meters away.

Even the under-construction Metro 7 between Dahisar (E) to Andheri (E) which runs parallel to and is just about a kilometre away from the existing suburban rail is a misconceived proposition. In the process it is an impediment at one of the major entry points of Mumbai—the western express highway—forever. This particular route is also adjoining a 6 kms. stretch of the National Park out of a total alignment of 18 kms, thus there is no future growth of ridership in the 6 kms stretch. We had suggested to the state government to extend Metro III further from SEEPZ to Dahisar so they could have saved thousands of crores and avoided duplication. Had they done this, Metro III could have been extended all the way to Dahisar where there is already a Metro yard for Metro 7 and the battle for the Aarey forest land could have been avoided. This would also have facilitated seamless connectivity and travel all the way from Dahisar to Colaba.

Also the well-known transport expert, Ashok Datar, had prepared a plan for dedicated bus lanes on the western express highway. Now with the elevated Metro 7 between Andheri and Dahisar this option is closed forever.

Similarly, the METRO 2B which is now being challenged in the High Court, is poorly planned where the entire western suburbs from Bandra

Reclamation to Dahisar (W) with the potential ridership of lakhs of commuters, has no seamless connectivity to the city as well as both the airports. The entire route of Metro 2B has been planned only on the arterial roads of SV Road, Gulmohar Road, etc. where there are innumerable sharp turns and curves, apart from the huge complexities of crossing over the Juhu Airport funnel, the western and central railway tracks, the monorail, the eastern freeway etc.

Metro VI, which is proposed to connect Jogeshwari and Kanjurmarg, is planned as yet another elevated alignment, which will run parallel to the existing Metro 1, just about two to three kilometres apart. If Metro 1 had been underground, then it could have been well-connected to the airports and there could have been an underground loop connecting the entire Powai development on the eastern side and Lokhandwala/Millat Nagar on the western side.

It should be noted that elevated Metro stations are massive structures of about 80,000 –1 lakh sq.ft in the middle of the road, that too at a distance of every kilometer. Therefore, it would be disastrous to encroach upon even a fraction of the width of the vital JVLR road. It is most unfortunate that the present government is insensitive where even a small stretch of serenity along Powai lake is being snatched and replaced with a mammoth Metro.

## Are we using the latest technology for our Metros?

Yes, we are using the latest technology for our underground Metro. What is lacking is the implementation, the selection of routes and integrating of stations with other modes of transport. In the city of Mumbai there are many under-utilised public



**N**itin Killawala graduated in Architecture from Bombay in 1974 and gained invaluable professional experience with the then Lok Sabha M.P., Mr. Pilloo Mody for the next four years. He formed the Group Seven Architects & Planners Pvt. Ltd. and has been awarded for excellence in architecture with several awards such as the JIIA, IIID, JK Awards, etc. He is the Past President of the Institute of Indian Interior Designers. He has been actively involved with NGOs and citizens' associations in spearheading movements for an integrated transport plan for the city of Mumbai.

spaces, large bus depots, exhibition grounds and so on which can be utilised to construct underground metro stations. These spaces could then be new urban centres and landmarks for future growth of the city.

**Why do you think the present state government is so keen on elevated Metros despite the fact that the last chief minister said there should be no more elevated Metro lines after the Versova-Ghatkopar line?**

The present government, unfortunately, has become autocratic and not accountable. The Chief minister is insensitive to the city of Mumbai. Also, it's a misplaced political agenda to complete the Metro project within an election term. All over the world mass public transport projects such as Metros, whether elevated or underground, are always cost intensive. Therefore, the cost benefits spread over several generations must be considered against short term return on investment. **MMJ**

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