

MUMBAI MERI JAAN

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF AGNI

Action for good
Governance &
Networking in
India

AGNI

Editorial

From law-breakers to law makers

The nation goes to the polls from April 19 to June 1, to elect its representatives to the Lok Sabha, with the expectation that these new members of Parliament will serve them well. Therefore, the integrity of these elected representatives is of paramount importance, considering that they are entrusted with the responsibility of making decisions shaping the nation's future.

However, when individuals with criminal backgrounds or pending cases against them are elected to positions of power, it raises questions about the legitimacy and integrity of the political system. In India, as in many other countries, the presence of members of Parliament (MPs) with declared criminal cases has sparked widespread debate and concern.

Disturbingly though, data from the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) reveals that the trend of MPs with criminal backgrounds seems to be escalating with every general election. Similarly, the proportion of MPs with serious criminal cases has also steadily risen over the years.

MPs WITH DECLARED CRIMINAL CASES		MPs WITH DECLARED SERIOUS CASES	
2004 ELECTION	24%	2004 ELECTION	12%
2009 ELECTION	30%	2009 ELECTION	15%
2014 ELECTION	34%	2014 ELECTION	22%
2019 ELECTION	44%	2019 ELECTION	30%

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) is an apolitical and non-partisan, non-profit organisation in India, dedicated to electoral and political reforms for over 25 years.

ADR filed a public interest litigation (PIL) with the Delhi High Court, regarding the disclosure of candidates' criminal, financial, and educational backgrounds when contesting elections. Based on this PIL, the Supreme Court made it mandatory for all candidates contesting elections to disclose their criminal, financial, and educational backgrounds before the polls, by filing an affidavit.

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Their name is Bond, Team Electoral Bond

 [Himanshi Dhawan, Times Network](#)

ADR activists, lawyers and a retired navy officer were key to the Supreme Court striking down the poll funding scheme. Here is their journey towards a more accountable democracy

If today, revelations about the donors who bought electoral bonds are a hot topic of discussion, much of the credit goes to a bunch of persistent civil society and RTI activists and a dogged legal team. Chief among them is a non-profit called the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), which filed a petition in 2017, soon after the electoral bonds scheme was announced in Parliament.

But few know that it all started 25 years ago with an innocuous message: "Please come to my room for a meeting." A group of



professors from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and some others gathered to discuss what could be done to stop the politician-criminal nexus. The missive had been sent by IIM professor Trilochan Sastry.

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Lok Sabha Elections 2024: BMC, Citizens Associations Team Up To Boost Voter Turnout

 [RUCHA KANOLKAR](#)

Scheduled for May 20, 2024, voting will occur across Mumbai City District and Mumbai Suburban District, encompassing six electoral constituencies in total. Numerous citizen groups in Mumbai have also launched voter awareness campaigns.

In an endeavour to bolster voter participation in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has initiated a series of measures. Scheduled for May 20, 2024, voting will occur across Mumbai City District and Mumbai Suburban District, encompassing six electoral constituencies in total. Numerous citizen groups in Mumbai have also launched voter awareness campaigns.

Various methods are being



employed to raise awareness among voters in both districts. The BMC is striving to encourage greater participation among residents of Mumbai City and Mumbai Suburban Districts. Among these efforts, Additional Municipal Commissioner (City) Dr. (Ms.) Ashwini Joshi has directed the implementation of awareness campaigns through unique channels, targeting construction companies, large buildings, business complexes, markets, theatres, malls, schools, and colleges.

A review meeting was convened at the BMC headquarters on April 1, 2024, to assess the progress

of endeavours aimed at enhancing voter turnout in the Lok Sabha elections. Additional Municipal Commissioner (Elections) Mr. Vijay Balamwar presented the plans and initiatives undertaken for election management and voter awareness.

Dr. Ashwini Joshi, Additional Municipal Commissioner (City), stated, "On Monday, May 20, 2024, voting will take place for six Lok Sabha constituencies in Mumbai City and Mumbai Suburban Districts. Efforts are underway from the BMC, Mumbai City District, and Mumbai Suburban District to coordinate efforts. Compared to the last Lok Sabha elections held in 2019, we aim to increase voter turnout significantly."



Additionally, municipal authorities were directed to formulate action plans to augment turnout in electoral wards where voter participation was below 60

Under the Systematic Voter Education **Contd. on page 4**

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Littering? Watch Out For UPI-Equipped Clean-Up Marshals Deployed By BMC

These teams have been appointed on a pilot basis in A-ward (Colaba, Churchgate area) and C ward (Kalbadevi, Marine Lines). For transparency, penalties will be collected online.

The BMC, on 2nd April, deployed its new teams of clean-up marshals to penalise citizens for littering, garbage burning and illegal dumping of waste. These teams have been appointed on a pilot basis in A-ward (Colaba, Churchgate area) and C ward (Kalbadevi, Marine Lines). For transparency, penalties will be collected online.

The scheme to have marshals in every civic ward was introduced in 2007. However, it was discontinued several times amidst extortion allegations.

The last contract ended in 2022, but marshals are needed to discipline the city and to prevent garbage being dumped in public places, officials said. So, the BMC came up with the idea of introducing a digital mode of payment and police verification of marshals.



The online penalty platform was developed by the BMC's IT department.

They are equipped with a small printer connected to their mobile through Bluetooth. They can print the receipt of the penalty and the amount will be deposited in their agency.

The marshals have the authority to impose fines ranging from Rs100 to Rs1,000 for littering. They are authorised to penalise individuals for illegal garbage and debris dumping, burning waste, spitting, littering, and not picking up pet waste.

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A mini marathon was flagged off by Vishwas Nagre Patil, ADGP, EOW, as a part of voting awareness campaign between Ghatkopar and Vikhroli

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Stories of Good Governance

Hospital Healthcare Delivery Patient Satisfaction - 3

Welcoming Patients and Loved Ones at Our Hospital

Shrikant Soman, AGNI Trustee

Understanding the critical role loved ones play in a patient's healing journey, our hospital prioritises the well-being and comfort of both patients and their families throughout their stay. We strive to create a supportive and compassionate environment that fosters positive outcomes for everyone involved.

In our commitment to elevate the experience for patients' relatives and provide them with a more enjoyable stay, we have curated the following facilities:

Nourishing Comfort: We offer a welcoming and clean restaurant featuring diverse culinary options to cater to various dietary needs.

Comfortable ICU waiting area: Individual reclining chairs/beds with reading lights, soothing music, TVs with Bluetooth headphones, and an intercom system provide a tranquil space for families to rest and stay connected.

Empowerment through education: Educational workshops equip relatives with knowledge on medical and healthcare matters, enabling them to better support their loved ones.

Calming Reading Corner: A well-stocked library offering a variety of reading materials provides a quiet retreat for reflection and rejuvenation.

Human Touch in Healthcare: How Patient Relations Executives Elevate the Experience

Investing in Empathy: Building the PRE Team

To ensure exceptional patient care, we established a dedicated team of Patient

Relations Executives (PREs). These individuals underwent rigorous training, equipping them with both **soft skills** for building rapport and **hospital operations** knowledge to navigate sensitive situations effectively. Their commitment to excellence ensures a smooth and personalized experience for every patient.

Beyond Greetings: Fostering Genuine Connections

Our PREs go beyond simply inquiring about well-being. They embark on daily patient visits, engaging in friendly conversations to **build authentic connections** with patients and their families. This warm approach has resonated profoundly, with PREs becoming the most highly regarded aspect of patient care, often exceeding expectations set by other interactions.

Unveiling the Untold: Valuable Feedback for Growth

Beyond pleasantries, these visits unlock invaluable insights. Unburdened by the formality of complaints, patients readily confide their **feelings, perceptions, and suggestions** to our PREs. This unfiltered feedback serves as a vital source for identifying areas requiring improvement, ultimately enhancing the overall patient experience.

By investing in dedicated PREs and fostering meaningful connections, we strive to create an exceptional and personalised healthcare journey for every patient.

Celebrating life, even in the hospital

More Than Just Treatment: Recognizing the Power of Birthdays

Our commitment to patient well-being **contd. on Page 4**

A Piece of Peace Suma Narayan

There is a special place in Juhu, that my friend, Sandhya Ullal introduced me to. It is a tiny little tongue of land that runs parallel to the strip of coast that is Juhu beach, from one of the entry points of the beach, all the way to Hotel Sun N Sand.



This was the same garden where AGNI had one of its Coordinators meeting last year. - Editor

This is the result of the concerted efforts of the Juhu Citizens Welfare Association, The local MLA Shri Ameet Satam has consistently helped upgrade the facilities in the garden. In this narrow space, there are about 70 coconut trees. Forgive me if I zero in on the coconut trees first: it is the Malayalee in me that notices such things first.

There are walkways and gazebos, artistically spaced and placed plant circles, small podiums and platforms for meditation, yoga, and the like.

What I found even more appealing than the profusion of coconut trees, is the aesthetic placement of huge stone boulders along the strip of land. These have been placed so perfectly, that they seem to have occurred naturally in those spaces. They invite quiet contemplation and a feeling of peace, when one looks at them, almost as though Nature Herself intended them to be there.

And to return to the coconut trees again, every one of them

has been fitted with a ring and a bag, to catch the stray coconut before it falls on the heads of the unwary walker.

Liberally sprinkled along the walkways and small gardens, is a profusion of benches. When I was there one evening, I saw several people who entered for

their evening walks, and to catch up with friends and neighbours. There was a gentleman who came in, armed with assorted nuts, in a little pouch. As soon as he settled down on one of the benches, one of the resident squirrels slithered down from her perch on the coconut tree. She sat up on her hind legs and looked enquiringly at the gentleman; he laughed and threw down a nut or two. She sat there and deliberately ate one, then the other, and looked at him again. The process was repeated, as we sat watching with both curiosity, and bated breath.

A couple of minutes later, a rival squirrel dared to encroach on her food, and she chased him away back into a tree.

We laughed our heads off.

Beyond the horizon, the Sun bid goodbye to the earth, laying down a carpet of gold, across the ocean, to remember him by.

We sat and watched silently, each feeling our hearts touched with nobility at something so beautiful and ethereal.

Life is beautiful.

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High Court Raps State For Not Striving For Disabled-Friendly Footpaths Urvi Mahajani

During the last hearing, the court had asked the government to list the steps taken to provide easy footpath access to the disabled.

The Bombay High Court rapped the Maharashtra government over the non-functional state advisory board constituted to frame policies under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. It has asked the principal secretary or secretary of the department concerned to file an affidavit within two weeks.

Challenges In Footpath Accessibility For Disabled Notified In HC Hearing

The HC had taken a suo motu (on its own) cognisance



of the issue after it received an email from wheelchair-bound Karan Shah, 25, highlighting the inaccessibility of footpaths, by people similarly placed as him, due to closely placed bollards. During the last hearing, the court had asked the government to list the steps taken to provide easy footpath access to the disabled.

The government informed a bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Arif Doctor that the board was constituted between 2016 and 2019. However, it does



not have any non-official members as contemplated under the Disability Act. Notably, the board has met just twice thus far. The bench asked, "Why do you make such legislation if it cannot be followed? Is this legislation to be kept in bookshelves?"

HC Criticises State Disability Welfare Department Over Lack Of Board Meetings

Irked, the bench said, "Apart from two meetings, not even a single discussion was held for all these over four years? To activate the statutory board, do you need orders from the court? There is a statutory board which is not meeting even once?" It further reminded that the law mandated that the board must meet at least once every six months.

During the last hearing, the HC had asked the Metropolitan Region Development Authority and the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation to strive for removal of bollards on roads under their limits. While the former agency assured to clear the obstruction in two months, the latter informed that there are only highways under its jurisdiction. Likewise, BMC counsel Anil Singh said that the BMC is working on the issue and the same will be addressed in a few months.

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A media monitoring room has been set up at the old Customs Office (City Dist. Collector's) at Fort to monitor paid-news, advertisements or propaganda materials on news channels, radio and social media

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Lok Sabha Elections 2024

Contd. from Page 1 and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Programme, the 171 Mankhurd-Shivaji Nagar constituency organized a voter registration camp in the Kamla Raman Nagar area in coordination with the Govandi Citizens Welfare Forum. This initiative aims to foster a culture of voting and empower citizens to exercise their rights. Shaikh Faiyaz Alam, founder of Govandi Citizen Welfare Forum said, "In future, we request more people to organize such camps in their respective areas, so that the custom of voting becomes common in the society and there should be awareness about it, our only objective is to

Lokhandwala Oshiwara Citizen's Association, emphasized their ongoing efforts in conducting voter awareness campaigns. He stated, "We conduct these campaigns every Sunday, utilizing boards and images to inspire individuals. We strategically target high-traffic areas to ensure a significant turnout on voting day. Looking ahead to the upcoming month of May, we plan to intensify our awareness initiatives, carefully selecting dates to dissuade individuals from scheduling vacations on the voting day. Highlighting the past turnout statistics, particularly the 50.3% figure for the North West ward in 2019, we are



platforms where we share informative content. We recognize ourselves as significant contributors in terms of taxes but have been among the lowest in voter turnout. Without amplifying our voices through voting, we cannot drive meaningful change." As May 20, 2024, approaches, the BMC has initiated planning efforts across all 24 administrative departments. Moreover, steps are being taken to engage artists from the Marathi and Hindi film

Hospital Health-care Delivery Patient Satisfaction - 3

contd. from Page 2 extends far beyond administering medical care. We believe in acknowledging and honouring the individual experiences of each patient, understanding that healing encompasses more than just physical treatment. One seemingly simple yet impactful way we demonstrate this is through our birthday celebration program. Tears of Joy: Bringing Smiles to Patients' Faces Witnessing the profound impact of this program on patients, particularly older



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adults, has been deeply moving. Many confided in us that

get every citizen of Govandi to vote and raise their voice for their rights. Andheri Lokhandwala Oshiwara Citizens Association has been conducting voter awareness campaigns every Sunday, focusing primarily on first-time voters. Dhaval Shah, a member of the Andheri

determined not to remain the lowest performers. Given the densely populated nature of the North West constituency, our outreach efforts extend to schools, colleges, clubs, jogging parks, and social media

industries in the awareness campaign. Theatres and auditoriums will serve as venues for these campaigns, with regular announcements planned at bus stops and railway stations to remind commuters to vote.

birthday celebrations were rarely, if ever, acknowledged at home, leaving them feeling forgotten and lonely. The act of singing "Happy Birthday" and sharing a cake brought tears to their eyes, not of sadness, but of gratitude and appreciation. They felt remembered, valued, and celebrated, a powerful reminder that even in the hospital, life can be joyful.

A Holistic Approach: Building Meaningful Connections These experiences reinforced our belief in the importance of holistic care. By acknowledging and honouring individual experiences, we can contribute to a more positive and meaningful hospital stay for our patients. It's not just about treating the illness, but about creating a supportive environment that fosters connection, joy, and a sense of being valued. This holistic approach ultimately leads to better overall patient well-being and a more positive healing experience.

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