

# Mumbai Meri Jaan



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



Editorial

## Onset of festive season

With the month of July coming to an end the festival season will begin, stretching from August to December. Since Covid 19 is here to stay, we have to live with it while taking precautions to prevent transmission of the disease.

Ganesh Chaturthi, the first festival to herald the festive season, will be celebrated in a subdued manner this year. The BMC has already issued guidelines on the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations which will begin from August 22. The maximum height permitted for a mandal ganpati is 4 ft and a household ganpati 2ft. Further, the guidelines also urge citizens to immerse idols in their homes and avoid travelling to crowded waterfronts.

The BMC has mentioned that there will be no immersions at beaches to avoid crowds and maintain social distancing. Instead, citizens could bring their idols to the gates of their complexes where it would be collected by the BMC and immersed in artificial ponds. Avoiding crowded beaches would also ensure protection to citizens and their families from the Covid 19 disease.

The BMC also hopes that there will be only one Ganpati mandal per corporator ward. This means that as against the usual 3000 Ganapati mandals there should be only 220 this year.

After the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations there will be Navratri, Diwali and Christmas and the government will issue guidelines for these festivals too.

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## 100% pass – Gundavali Municipal School: an AGNI initiative

Sharad Kumar with inputs from Pratik Mishra AGNI K East JAAG volunteer

The BMC schools this year have reversed their past poor results with an unprecedented 93.25% from the 53.14% last year. Gundavali Municipal School in K/East (Andheri) – an AGNI initiative, topped the list with all the 35 students that appeared passed thus giving the school a 100% results.

Out of the 35 students, eight students scored 70% and above with the topper Ritesh Mali secured 78.60% and with 100% pass percentage for the school it was really a great achievement looking at the areas from where the students come in to study and the environment when they go back home.

It is due to the efforts of AGNI

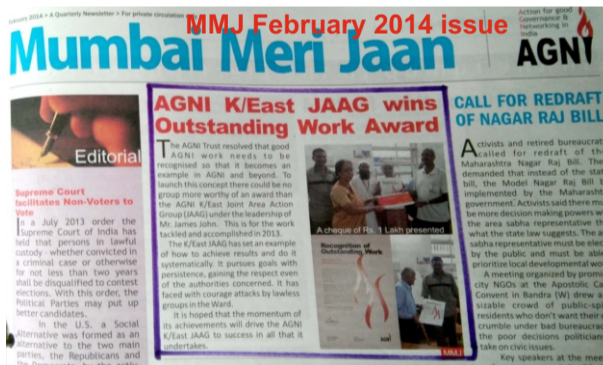


volunteers who worked hard in training the students right through the year.

In September 2018, Principal Prashant Lopes approached James John, AGNI Coordinator of K/East if they could teach his 10<sup>th</sup> standard

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**AGNI K/East Jaag won the Rupees 1 Lakh award from AGNI in 2014 for being the best JAAG. See MMJ clip of February 2014 issue.**



## City non-profit Project Mumbai to get UN's special award

Project Mumbai, a 20-month-old non-profit organisation that has worked on various social initiatives during the Covid-19 pandemic, is one of 50 organisations in the world selected by the United Nations (UN) SDG Action Campaign for a special award.

The UN SDG Action Campaign is an initiative established by the UN Secretary-General to bring people together from every part of the world, to act on sustainable development goals (SDG). Through its annual Action Awards, the UN SDG Action Campaign has

recognised impactful initiatives undertaken and implemented to improve people's lives amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Of the three recipients from India, Project Mumbai is the only one from the western region. The organisation has launched three mental health helplines; built a network of volunteers to provide groceries and medicines to senior citizens and people with disabilities living alone, and contributed over 2 lakh personal protective equipment (PPE) kits to doctors and frontline

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## Sukthankar retires as AGNI Chairman & Managing Trustee, now a Patron

Gerson daCunha, AGNI Convenor

Mr. D. M. Sukthankar IAS (Retd), AGNI Chairman and Managing Trustee, has decided to lay down office. Pressed not to cut off his association, Mr. Sukthankar has agreed to accept the title of Patron of AGNI. It is in the hope that his inspiring association



with us will continue in this form that we Trustees of AGNI accept his decision with regret.

Mr. Sukthankar was Chief Secretary of Maharashtra State after functioning as Secretary, Urban Development, Government of India and Municipal Commissioner of Greater Mumbai, among numerous offices of high responsibility in government, state and central.

Mr. Sukthankar has repeatedly brought his immense knowledge and experience of governance to help AGNI maintain its focus and interact with officers of the state government, the Law, the media and citizens in general.

Mr. Sukthankar has given his time, effort and regular contributions to help sustain AGNI's endeavors in pursuance of its goals as enshrined in its name, Action for good Governance and Networking in India.

Above all we treasure his high integrity which characterized his long years in government and his exemplary work in civil society.

MMJ

## Housing societies show compassion in pandemic

In the first lockdown that was promulgated by the government on March 25, 2020, widely considered to be one of the most stringent in the world, apart from NGOs, even housing societies displayed compassion and stepped up to assist the poor as well as distressed migrant workers. Mohit Pande, Chairman of Tata Symphony housing society in L ward and a member of AGNI, described briefly to Pamela Cheema of MMJ, how his society partnered with a neighbouring housing society, Synchronicity, to feed workers who were on the edge of starvation.

Excerpts:

### How did your housing societies get to know about the migrant workers whom you helped?

Initially, we used to organise langars not specifically for migrant workers but for anyone who was in distress and needed meals. Mr. Vasant Gaikwad, a policeman from the Saki Naka police station located in Chandivali, L ward, contacted us in his personal capacity and told us that every day there were many needy people waiting outside Sangharsh Nagar police station in the hope that someone would help them. Occasionally, some helpful people or an NGO would distribute food to them but the people, including the workers, had no guarantees that this would continue on a daily basis.

### Could you give a ballpark figure about how many meals you distributed?

Around 23,000 meals. We started our project on April 15, 2020.

### How much did it cost?

Around Rs 6 lakhs approximately.

### How did you finance it?

Initially this project was self-funded by a group of friends. Sukumar Panikkar, the

secretary of Tata Symphony along with Mandeep Singh, the chairman of Synchronicity, began this project with money of their own and later by crowdfunding the project. The total amount collected for this project was Rs.4 lakhs. We also received support from various people across Chandivali but the major contributors in this initiative were Tata Symphony and Synchronicity.

### How did you organise your kitchen? Can you explain the logistics of the whole project?

One of the canteens in Sangharsh Nagar had closed due to the lockdown and staff was available. We hired the canteen and their utensils for the langar. They were a team of 6 cooks and helpers who would prepare meals twice daily.

### How many meals did you provide in a day?

We provided an average of a 1000 meals a day

### Now that the workers have left for their hometowns have you discontinued this project?

We have currently paused the project. But very soon we intend to start something again wherever its needed the most.

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## Two city teenagers help NGO raise funds for 1.3 lakh meals for the poor

Tanushree Venkatraman

With the Covid-19 outbreak leaving many in need of relief, some agencies like the NGO Indian Development Foundation (IDF) have found support coming from unexpected avenues. Two teenagers from Mumbai have helped IDF raise funds to mobilise 1.32 lakh meals for the needy in the city.

IDF's Meal to Heal program has provided 1.5 million meals in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) so far, said Dr Narayan Iyer, chief executive officer at IDF. "We got a lot of support from several youngsters in the city. We have

## Mumbai Responds Network works for Lockdown affected communities

Austin Nazareth

Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan (GBGBA) and Helping Hands Charitable Trusts led by Bilal Khan, Lara Jesani and Anil Hebbar initiated a fundraiser on



Anil Hebbar, Lara Jesani and Bilal Khan from left to right in the centre of the picture

fundraiser on Ketto.org on March 26, 2020, as the Lockdown began.

The first major lockdown which began on March 25, 2020 caused a crisis that over-

were dispensed through six kitchens in four bastis in Mumbai. These meals also reached some areas in Bhiwandi.



whelmed the poor. The Mumbai Responds Network comprises of civil society organizations which provide Covid-19 relief to the poor and migrants.

The organization provided ration kits to community kitchens, old age homes, bastis and hamlets in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Cash transfers were also given to the needy. Above 12,000 meals

Intra/interstate travel was provided for migrants. PPE for frontline workers, thermal guns and pulse oximeters were also supplied to various hospitals. A camp was organized for over 300 migrants at Civil Defence, Versova with 15 GBGBA volunteers.

Litigation by GBGBA and other organizations on the issue of food crisis in the bastis, migrants' travel, etc. has resulted in significant directives by the Bombay High Court. Due to various litigations on health care and testing for Covid 19 the Bombay High Court is monitoring the situation closely.

July 4, 2020 saw the completion of 100 days of relief work by Mumbai Responds Network. The Covid 19 pandemic will continue to over-shadow our lives in the foreseeable future, but thanks to Mumbai Responds Network, Mumbai city will emerge from this unprecedented crisis with renewed hope and strength.

MMJ



Ananya 17 Rajveer 16

also provided meals and dry ration kits to 200 transgenders in Mumbai," said Iyer.

In June, 16-year-old Rajveer Bothra took to Instagram and WhatsApp to talk about the Meal to Heal program, which provides dry rations and organises community kitchens. Bothra asked family and friends

to each donate ₹600 to the program which would help IDF provide a week's dry ration to a family, or make 30 meals in one of their community kitchens. "Within 10 days, we raised around ₹2 lakh," said Bothra, a resident of Malad.

Ananya Dalmia, 17, also helped IDF by creating a presentation

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## Covid active cases in H(West) dip by 23%

**Pratip Acharya**

Ever since members of the Advanced Locality Management (ALM) groups of H-West ward have jumped into the fray, there has been a near 23% dip in the number of active cases in the ward.

H-W ward has 487 active cases presently (as on July 5). As recently as June 27, it had 632 active cases and in one week, this number has fallen by 145.



As cases began to spike with the onset of the unlocking phase, the doubling rate decreased. With lockdown norms being relaxed, many residents began to step out of their homes and social distancing norms were flouted, leading to increased transmission.

To curtail the spread, Ward Officer Vinayak Vispute told residents that controlling the disease must become a public movement. Two weeks ago, ward officers held a video conference with ALM members, asking the latter to take the lead in the fight against the pandemic.

Following which the ALM groups began spreading awareness among the people, regarding the importance of wearing masks and being proactive about precautionary measures.

"We reached out to the local vendors and retailers, urging them to wear masks and explained to them the importance of carrying sanitisers," said Mario Fishery, ALM member, Chapel Road.

"There is a lot of



misinformation being spread about the disease, so our primary agenda was to educate the residents about the norms, as most people were behaving as though the pandemic was over," Fishery said.

As soon as the state government announced its Mission Begin Again plan, the maximum number of cases began to emerge from residential buildings, including high-rises, while the number of cases in the slum areas began to drop.

"The BMC identified the high-risk zones and ALMs spread authentic and proactive information in these areas. Civic volunteers also took part in fever camps and ground-level testing, by mobilising manpower to help officials," explained Fishery.

"We are putting technology to the best use and trying to curb misinformation as much as we can," he added.

**MMJ**

## Rotary club L Ward's distribution to health post workers

**Nutan Bhalla, AGNI Coordinator, L Ward**

In L ward the Rotary Club of Chandivali distributed rations and essential items to



16 health posts across the ward, thus reaching out to more than 400 health workers. The distribution of grain included rice, pulses, sugar, oil, condiments, biscuits as well as aprons, caps and sanitary napkins. This was done in a phased manner spread out over a few weeks with some



being done at the local health posts itself while the rest of the distribution was done at the L ward BMC office, Kurla.

The distribution was known as the With You Project and attracted wide support from residents in Chandivali.

**MMJ**

## South Mumbai residents collect over two lakh used milk bags for recycling

**Alka Dupar**

Residents from South Mumbai have collected over 2,45,000 used milk bags in the last ten months including the lockdown period. These bags will go for recycling. The efforts have been made to reduce the landfill and plastic at the dumping ground.

Little over a year ago, Kunti

Oza of 'Clean Mumbai Foundation', Hansu Pardiwala and Chitra Hiremath of 'Garbage Free India' received a WhatsApp message forward about the proper way to cut a milk bag.

The proper way was to cut it in a straight line instead of snipping the **Contd. on Page 4**

## Feedback to the July 2020 issue

● So glad to read about the good work being done by voluntary organizations. Wonder why the mainstream media do not carry more such news instead of wasting their and our time on politics and China rhetoric. - **N N Sachintanand, Senior Journalist & Columnist, ex Senior Correspondent, The Hindu**

● Our compliments to you and Pamela for keeping the flag of AGNI flying high even during lockdown. - **Shrikant Soman**

● Nicely covered various issues.

Lot of people have done tremendous contribution to the needy during this COVID-19. Hope the end comes soon.

We must place on record the sincere efforts made by Sri Sharad Kumarji in bringing out the journal uninterruptedly since years and see that it reaches everyone in time. And what a vast content it has got. Sharadji, one of the senior most members of our CoRWA that way sets an example to all of us to emulate. It's always a pleasure to meet him in the CoRWA meetings either in Mumbai or at our NCRWAs, which he would never miss, even at his age. - **Dr. Murthy KR S, Secretary General, CoRWA (Confederation of Resident Welfare Associations in India)**

● MMJ makes one speechless. The range of issues covered and the calibre of the

people behind each NGO is truly inspiring. The affection Residents have for the city despite mind-boggling problems is so well expressed & energising. (MMJ!). The translation of the 85-year-old lady's poem needs to be read by a wider audience. - **Gita Dendukuri, CoRWA**

● Compliment you, and team, on wonderful efforts - to restore our great city. - **Antony Fernandes**

● Congratulations on initiating such a meaningful and much needed initiative. Dearth of information regarding accessing various services is proving to be a big problem in this emergency. - **AL Sharda**

**MMJ**

**100% pass – Gundavali Municipal School: an AGNI initiative**

**Contd. from Page 1** students. Not to miss this opportunity to do some yeomen service, AGNI K/East volunteers took up the challenge. To make up the loss of time, the volunteers took classes on Sundays too.

Ms Mamta Rao, the Deputy Education Officer was a pillar of support to the AGNI K East JAAG initiative as she was very clear that AGNI volunteers can do it and will do it. Mr Avinash and Ms Shubhagi



both the MCGM teachers allotted for the class were a blessing with regards to the administrative support extended to the volunteers. Mr Prashant Lopes, the Principal is a replica of Ms Mamta Rao as he feels anything that AGNI K East JAAG touches will turn GOLD. He wants AGNI to take over the sports activities of the school like Football under the guidance of AGNI volunteer Agnelo; handball under James John.

The volunteer teachers, the lifeline of the students should not be missed out. They have shown them the beacon of light to walk ahead and reach their goals. Each and every teacher being a volunteer for this activity, enacted

their roles like a professional and disciplined teacher. The volunteers who were teaching various subjects were :- Mrs. Vandana, Mrs. Mumtaz Khan, Mr. Pramod Sawant, Ms. Nisha Zore, Ms. Jayati, Ms. Manali, Ms. Sunita Gupta, Ms. Nidhi Randive, Mr. Jeeva Rao (Babu Sir Classes), Mr. Pratik Mishra, Mrs. Jyoti, Mrs. Neeta Shah, Ms. Jasmine, Ms. Neetu Singh, Mrs. Varada, Ms. Ameer Panchal, Mr. Prithvi Shetty, Mrs. Deepali Shetty, Ms. Kajol, Mr. John Neelankavil, and Ms. Aloysia D'souza.

During this period, it was noticed that students were under severe Psychological pressure and their level of understanding was also too low and we were very short of time to look into this need of the students.

MA Psychology students from Maniben Nanavati Women's College conducted counselling session 3 days in a week under the able guidance of their lecturer Ms Neha Bhansali. The results were there to be seen with many students opening up and it was very helpful for the students to take a step forward.

AGNI K/East JAAG would like to thank MCGM officials for the faith they reposed in us. K East Ward Assistant Municipal Commissioner wants them to enact the same principle in all the 83 schools of K East Ward. **MMJ**

**South Mumbai residents collect over two lakh used milk bags for recycling**

**Contd. from Page 3** edge on and that got us thinking. We realized that a large part of the plastic waste that finds its way onto the beaches and naalabs are the milk bags. We also saw that the rag pickers were not interested in this form of waste and were not collecting these milk bags. Since the milk bags

are an item of daily use and is used by everyone in the city, we thought we should educate people about this and should start collection of milk bags. And that's how we started the 'Milk Bag Project' – a first of its kind, which has never been done before, said Kunti Oza. **MMJ**

**City non-profit Project Mumbai to get UN's special award**

**Contd. from Page 1** workers. It also provided meals to 45 lakh homeless people and migrants, and grocery kits to over 20,000 families.

“This recognition by the UN honours the spirit of every individual who has contributed to our fight against Covid-19,” said Shishir Joshi, founder of Project Mumbai.

Marina Ponti, global director, UN SDG Action Campaign, said, “We congratulate Project Mumbai for their solidarity and determination to improve others' lives, inspire resilience, and lift hopes in the face of this crisis.” **MMJ**

**Two city teenagers help NGO raise funds for 1.3 lakh meals for the poor**

**Contd. from Page 2** about its projects and approaching private companies in the city for donations.

“With the help of my parents, I could reach out to several corporates,” said Dalmia, who is also volunteering with the NGO Magic Bus India Foundation for an upcoming fundraiser.

Both Dalmia and Bothra had previously volunteered with IDF. “Looking at what was happening, I felt I needed to do something. So I called IDF, which asked me to help them raise funds,” said Bothra. **MMJ**

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**To volunteer in AGNI or to form Advanced Locality Management (ALM) contact your respective Ward Coordinators below**

**AGNI Ward Coordinators**

WARD NAME	AREAS	WARD COORDINATOR	PHONE	EMAIL
A	Churchgate, Colaba, Cuffe Parade, Fort, CST	Jennifer Shetty	9223415069	<a href="mailto:jenniferagni@gmail.com">jenniferagni@gmail.com</a>
D	Malabar Hill, Mahalaxmi, Opera House, Girgaum	Theo D'Souza	9820303940	<a href="mailto:theoemsouza@gmail.com">theoemsouza@gmail.com</a>
F/North	Sion, Wadala, Matunga (E), Dadar (E), Antop Hill	Nikhil Desai	9819930405	<a href="mailto:n.c.desai2012@gmail.com">n.c.desai2012@gmail.com</a>
G/North	Mahim, Dadar (W), Matunga West, Dharavi	Bulu Saldanha	9920323831	<a href="mailto:bulu_saldhana@yahoo.com">bulu_saldhana@yahoo.com</a>
H/East	Bandra (E), Khar (E), Santa Cruz (E), Kalina	Reuben Dias	9930569225	<a href="mailto:reuben6947@yahoo.co.in">reuben6947@yahoo.co.in</a>
H/West	Bandra (W), Khar (W), Santa Cruz (W)	Lilian Pais	9920663748	<a href="mailto:lilianpais66@gmail.com">lilianpais66@gmail.com</a>
K/East	Vile Parle (E), Andheri (E), Jogeshwari (E)	James John	9324086140	<a href="mailto:k-jamesjohn@hotmail.com">k-jamesjohn@hotmail.com</a>
K/West	Vile Parle (W), Andheri (W), Versova, Jogeshwari (W)	Zahida Banatwalla	9820790749	<a href="mailto:zahida55@gmail.com">zahida55@gmail.com</a>
L	Kurla, Nehru Nagar, Chandivli	Nutan Bhalla	9819171015	<a href="mailto:nutsie59@yahoo.co.in">nutsie59@yahoo.co.in</a>
N	Ghatkopar, Vikhroli	Kishor K. Chudasama	9821051346	<a href="mailto:kishorkc_shantu@rediffmail.com">kishorkc_shantu@rediffmail.com</a>
P/South	Goregaon (West)	Anthony Dias	9821291660	<a href="mailto:diasapvoice@gmail.com">diasapvoice@gmail.com</a>
R/South	Kandivli East & West, Charcop	S. K. Nangia	9322258038	<a href="mailto:sknangia2004@yahoo.com">sknangia2004@yahoo.com</a>
R/North	Borivli, Dahisar East & West, IC Colony	Willie Shirsat, Shrikant Soman, Glenda Almeida	9820213392 9324228946 9820291563	<a href="mailto:shirsatwillie382@hotmail.com">shirsatwillie382@hotmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:shrikant.soman@gmail.com">shrikant.soman@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:glenda.almeida@commerzbank.com">glenda.almeida@commerzbank.com</a> <a href="mailto:almanac.rks@gmail.com">almanac.rks@gmail.com</a>
M/East & West	Deonar, Mankhurd, Chembur, Govandi	Rajkumar Sharma	9820989310	
S	Bhandup, Kanjurmarg, Powai	Pamela Cheema	9820150748	<a href="mailto:pamelacheema@gmail.com">pamelacheema@gmail.com</a>
T	Mulund	Laxmidas Thakkar	32911966	<a href="mailto:l.thakkar@yahoo.co.in">l.thakkar@yahoo.co.in</a>