

Mumbai Meri Jaan



Forward This To All - And All Forward - Together



Editorial

BMC schools to get CCTVs

In 2016 AGNI had launched a social audit of BMC schools, where our coordinators/volunteers visited schools to check the condition of the schools as well as their cleanliness and to ensure that girls toilets were also constructed. Schools were also monitored to ascertain that the 28 items that had to be given free to the students had reached them. Since then AGNI'S newsletter has diligently reported on the dilapidated condition of BMC schools. Thus AGNI is happy that the BMC will be installing CCTVs in about 1000 BMC schools out of 4000.

CCTVs are the need of the hour. They will be helpful to check the presence of teachers and staff and the overall cleanliness and maintenance of the schools in real time. Sometimes, when there is a complaint about poor maintenance at a school, it is difficult to estimate the extent of damage. The cameras will be placed at entry, exit gates and in classes between IV and VII.

As of now, none of the BMC schools has CCTVs. The civic body set aside a sum of Rs. 24.30 crore for 6,666 CCTVs for schools in the budget document of 2019-20. **MMJ**

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A unique school

Shyama Kulkarni

Having been a teacher in Bandra for over two decades I have interacted with most schools. But I was really honoured when Auxillium Convent invited me as a Chief Guest for their Annual Function. This is an amazing school with only 800 girls. Their commitment to the environment is deep-rooted. Every school wall has a message painted by its students under the guidance of an inspiring teacher, Yolanda. In fact, they have won the Green



Award three years in a row.

What impressed me most at their Annual Function was that every dance had a theme, for example, the issue of saving Aarey. Girls danced like trees that were being hacked, animals running for safety and people protesting against the environmental massacre.

In most schools programmes begin with a prayer dance, generally with a lit lamp and a



classical dance. But Auxillium Convent was refreshingly different. They had students dancing with symbols of different faiths like Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism and a symbol with a bird. Their message was that there is only one God, religion is the way to reach God and the bird carries that message.

How I wish that this message could reach all adults — especially politicians, because the children expressed so aptly that 'the Child is the Father of Man'. We need a United



India—that is the real prayer and kudos points to Auxillium Convent for expressing it.

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41 BMC schools shut down last year, says Praja Foundation

The Praja Foundation report also pointed at a steep fall in student enrolment in Class I and poor retention rates

A total of 41 BMC schools, most of them Marathi medium, were closed down in the last academic year 2018-19, according to data released by NGO Praja Foundation on Tuesday. Even Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu mediums have suffered a similar fate. The data show a declining preference for municipal schools in terms of enrolment and retention.

As per the Praja study, there has been a 58.6% decrease in enrolments in class I from 2009-10 to 2018-19, when the enrolments were 67,477 and 27,918 respectively. In this decade, enrolment in class I has been steadily falling with the sharpest fall witnessed in 2011-12.

A further disturbing trend is the rate of students dropping out of BMC **contd. on Page 4**

Steps to keep criminals out have failed: EC

Murali Krishnan

The directions issued by the Supreme Court in 2018 to give publicity to the criminal antecedents of candidates contesting elections has failed to yield the desired result of decriminalizing politics, the Election Commission of India (EC) told the apex court. A bench of Justices Rohinton Nariman and S Ravindra Bhat agreed to consider whether directions can be issued to political parties to deny tickets to persons with criminal backgrounds.

The court was hearing a contempt plea filed by advocate and BJP spokesperson Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay who alleged that despite directions by the Supreme Court, the government and the EC failed to take steps for decriminalisation of politics. The court asked the EC to come up with a proposal to address the issue. In its judgment delivered on September 25, 2019, the top court had recommended enactment of a strong law to decriminalize politics. It had issued directions to contesting candidates to disclose details of pending criminal cases against them in the form provided by the EC. It had also ordered political parties to publicise on their websites and in print and electronic media the criminal antecedents of its candidates.

Upadhyay submitted that the EC had issued directions to political parties but did not make the necessary amendments to the rules governing this particular aspect of elections, hence its directions did not have any legal sanctions. **contd. on Page 4**

Swachha Mumbai Abhiyaan

H (west) ALM meeting: A report

 **Shyama Kulkarni**

On Saturday January 18th, H/West Ward held an ALM meeting where more than 70 members were present. We were meeting the new Assistant Municipal Commissioner (AMC), Mr. Vinayak Vispute and the new Deputy Municipal Commissioner (DMC), Mr. Parag Masurkar, for the first time. Our Councillors, Asif Zakaria and Alka Kerkar, were invited too.

The crucial point on the Agenda was Solid Waste Management and our SWM Head, Sachin, did an excellent power point presentation. A question and answer session followed where members were informed that housing societies which composted their waste would get 5% rebate on property tax and those which introduced rain water harvesting, would get a further 5% rebate.



The members cheered when I shared with them that the property tax rebate announced by the Municipal Commissioner, Mr. Pardesi, was due to the meeting that



the AGNI Trustees had with him. He had implemented it in Pune as the city's Municipal Commissioner so why not in Mumbai to which he readily agreed.

A few suggestions were made in the meeting. They were firstly, dealing with SWM in slum areas and the clearance of debris, secondly an increase in the number of vehicles which have a compartment for dry waste attached to the wet waste vehicle so both can be collected without mixing them and thirdly ALM members made a list of RGs and PGs in their area where shredding machines could be set up and composting of waste from their neighbourhood could be done. This would also get rid of illegal encroachments in the open spaces and save transport fees to the dumping ground.

The DMC and AMC assured us they would look into these suggestions.

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Standardised design for footpaths in city soon

 **Sagar Pillai**

The civic body has decided to standardise the design of all footpaths and signages of shops across the city with an aim to revamp the public spaces and make them pedestrian-friendly.

The decision was taken by municipal commissioner Praveen Pardeshi. To improve pedestrianisation, footpaths across the city will be redesigned with a uniform signage board, street furniture (dustbins, benches, poles) and bus stands, officials from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.

A civic official said, "The size of the boards on the shops on a footpath should be of equal size and must not look uneven from any angle."

Civic officials said that the focus was enhancing aesthetics by redesigning footpaths and giving a better look to the streets.

BMC had **contd. on Page 4**

BMC to turn mangy Mahim beach into a tourist spot

 **Linah Baliga**

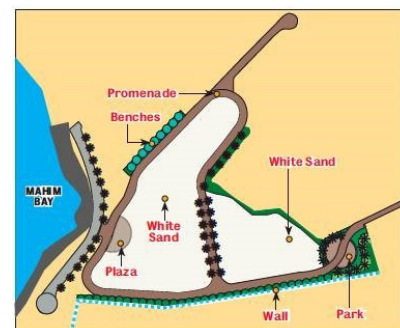
Plans a Rs 3.57-cr makeover with white sand volleyball court, promenade, children's park and antique benches

Arguably the city's most neglected beach, Mahim Reti Bunder is all set for nothing less than an international makeover. The BMC has proposed a plan worth Rs 3.57 crore to build a promenade, children's park and a volleyball court with imported, artificial white sand. Assistant municipal commissioner of G-Ward, Kiran Dighavkar, said the beach with its scenic view of Bandra-Worli Sea Link, has the potential of becoming another Girgaon Chowpatty. "The city can do well with another beach that earns BMC revenue while giving a breath-taking view of the Arabian Sea," said



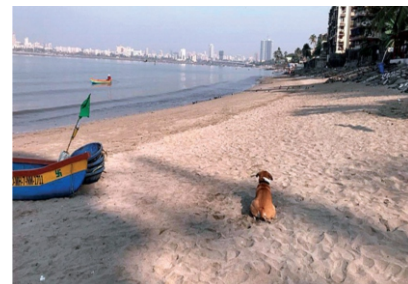
Dighavkar, adding that it will also help dissuade squatters, vagrants and open defecators.

Earlier, Mahim beach was encroached by illegally parked water tankers. In 2017, a couple—Indranil Sengupta and Rabia Tiwari—bought a sea-facing apartment that faced a garbage dump that the beach was then. They started a modest clean-up initiative that soon turned into a movement. With the Mithi river bringing 90 per cent of the filth to the beach, it has been an uphill task for the couple. With the BMC now planning a facelift, a makeover might soon become a reality. The proposed project involves cleaning the beach, removing rocks and debris, repairing the wall adjacent to



Mahim police quarters, building another one on the east side (adjacent to AK Vaidya Road), providing two entrance gates and making a 465-mt-long promenade.

The plan also includes an oval garden, Victoria benches, a walkway near the seaface and railings. There will also be an open theatre with bamboo fencing, with all open spaces



filled with artificial white sand. Antique light poles and arched gates will add to the retro look.

BMC officials confirmed that a registered surveyor will soon be appointed to carry out a contour survey of the area, following which an architect will be hired to prepare a landscaping plan.

"The current challenges are to remove garbage, debris and rocks. The total cost for the clean-up has been estimated at around Rs 9 lakh. The double bamboo fencing will cost another Rs 23 lakh," said Dighavkar, adding that the plan will be tabled at the civic standing committee's meeting.

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A VERY BIG THANK YOU for donation received in January 2020 from:- **Shrikant Soman Rs.1005/=**

NEWS IN PICTURES

Republic day celebrations

IN BORIVALI FIRE STATION OFFICER Mr Abhishek Parab unfurled the National flag. He urged the citizens to Join the



Volunteer Training program of Fire Brigade on Sundays and a CERTIFICATE authorizing you



to be in forefront at times of fire & other Emergencies would be given. **MMJ**

IN WADALA The oldest and the youngest were made to unfurl the National flag. The onlookers including taxi drivers



etc. joined in saluting and singing the National anthem. **MMJ**

Civic body mulls meters in each flat to reduce wastage of water

Aim is to incentivise water saving, penalise wastage: BMC chief Praveen Pardeshi

Sagar Pillai

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is mulling over the idea of setting up separate water meters for individual apartments instead of a combined meter system for housing societies. The BMC is also planning to provide subsidies to old flats or housing societies that opt for individual water meters.

An internal committee of the BMC studied water distribution in the city and submitted a report that suggested water consumption should be accounted for each home on a daily basis to prevent wastage and disproportionate distribution. Following this, at a meeting municipal commissioner Praveen Pardeshi directed officials to explore the idea of setting up individual meters, frame an action plan and submit the

same. "By these means, we can incentivise water-saving and impose penalties on wasteful use," said Pardeshi.

A senior official from BMC's hydraulic department said, "While a housing society has a common water meter for all flats, it is difficult to gauge which flat is using how much water as some residents can be very careful with water usage while others may be completely the opposite." However, some officials said implementing individual household meters is difficult and challenging considering the large number of consumers.

The hydraulic department is also framing a policy for individual household water meters for all new construction projects, commercial and residential. On an average, each household in Mumbai

CCTV launched in Wadala by M.P.

CCTV project was inaugurated by the Member of Parliament Shri Rahul Shewale on 25th January 2020 at Wadala. This project is fully sponsored by his MPLAD funds.



On the occasion, participants to the Tata Marathon from Wadala, were also facilitated



and honoured with certificates from Wadala (West) Citizens Forum. **MMJ**



K East JAAG meeting



Antony Dias
A G N I
Coordinator
P/South Ward,
completed
Para Legal
Volunteers
program of District Suburban
Legal Services Authority -
Bandra West. CONGRATS! **MMJ**



gets about three to four hours of water daily. The BMC supplies 3,750 million litres (ml) daily against the city's demand of 4,200(ml). The BMC requires 14.47ml water stock at the end of the monsoon for water to last till the next monsoon.

Civic officials said volumetric meters in every household may help prevent wastage. "We can charge households as per their usage of water, which will help avoid water wastage and will ensure equal distribution of water," said an official. However, Sitaram Shelar of the NGO Pani Haq Samiti questioned whether individual metres would be effective. "Not a single company that

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provides volumetric metres scientifically provides accurate data," said Shelar and added, "a white paper on the BMC's hydraulic department revealed that 80% of BMC's existing meters are defunct." **MMJ**

41 BMC schools shut down last year

contd. from Page 1 schools. In 2010-11, BMC schools retained 90 per cent of its students in class II, who were enrolled in class I the previous year. By 2018-19, only 22% of these students reached class X. This means that if 100 students enrolled in class I in 2009-2010, only 22 reached up class X in 2018-19. “These indicators testify that MCGM is unable to retain students in its schools. Ironically, all this is happening,



when the municipal budget for each student has grown from Rs 50,586 in 2014-15 to Rs 60,878 in 2018-19,” said Milind Mhaske, director, Praja Foundation. Praja data also pointed to an increasing preference for private schools among parents. A whopping 87 people interviewed said they would want to move their children to



private institutions; however, affordability was the biggest hindrance. The study also found poor level of engagement of councillors in municipal schools with 74 per cent skipping meetings of the school management committees (SMCs). “It is evident that if SMCs were effective, then the entire education system would have delivered good results. Even the teachers and other administrative staff related to education would have shown more accountability and responsiveness. But currently, training and monitoring of SMCs is not being done,” said Nitain Mehta, trustee of Praja Foundation. The BMC education officer did not comment on the findings of the Praja Foundation study. MMJ

Standardised design for footpaths

Contd. from Page 2 decided on standardised footpaths and signages around shops on a pilot basis at MG Road in Fort. BMC said the pilot project has been successful, and wanted to replicate the model across the city. The standardisation of the design will involve minimising signages and making them uniform for all commercial establishments, including restaurants and offices, and clearing hawkers from non-hawking zones. Along with footpaths, roads also will have a uniformed length and width. “We can select a patch of a particular road or a footpath and then decide to have a uniform length and width to it, following which standardisation of boards and street furniture can be decided. For standardising boards around shops in the city, BMC’s license department will have to work on the design and come up with a standard design.” Meanwhile, the municipal

Steps to keep criminals out have failed: EC

contd. from Page 1 Further, the EC neglected to give a list of leading newspapers and news channels wherein the criminal antecedents had to be publicised, so political parties did so in unpopular newspapers and news channels and at odd hours when people don't watch TV. The plea said that the consequences of permitting criminals to contest elections and become legislators were serious. MMJ commissioner also asked civic officials to ensure that the security in public gardens and open spaces are upgraded. He has asked officials to replace the compound walls of the gardens with railings for better visibility. Civic officials said this idea was mooted by activists previously and BMC is exploring its feasibility now. The officials of the traffic and licence departments, as well as ward officers have been asked to chalk out the plans to implement this move across all city gardens. MMJ

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