

Mumbai Meri Jaan



Forward This To All - And All Forward - Together

Editorial

Party less election to Municipalities – an appeal to SEC, Maharashtra!

Dr. N. Bhaskara Rao, a social scientist, with 60 years of track record focusing on public policies says, Indian democracy is not limited to Parliament and State Assemblies but the grassroots at the village and district level governance which is far more critical. Political parties need to be limited to the legislatures at two levels and make elections at other level as party-less adds Dr. Bhaskara Rao.

Our Founder Chairman, late Mr. B. G. Deshmukh and MMJ Editor have interacted with Dr. Bhaskara Rao a number of times at Delhi during electoral reforms meetings.

The Parliament and State Assemblies elections are fought party wise is understandable. They are meant more for passing laws, Acts and policies. However, in the Municipal elections, the Corporators elected are directly responsible for bettering the quality of life of citizens. Hence these elections should be fought on individual capability of knowing and work done in the ward, and should therefore be party-less. Though the village panchayat elections are not fought on party symbols, panels are fielded by political parties.

The gram panchayats are considered the third tier of governance. In fact, in Maharashtra, elections for gram panchayats are not held on party lines, using party symbols. Candidates are allotted election symbols from a list of free symbols. So why not extend the same to the Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra? The party Corporators who have worked for citizens' welfare in their constituencies can still get reelected without the party symbol.

Hope the State Election Commission will look into this matter.

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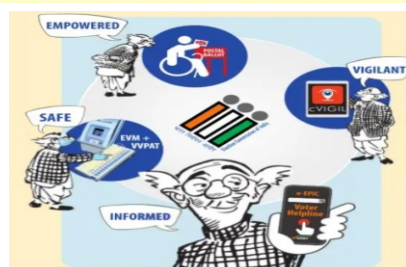
Digital EPIV (Voters Card)



On the occasion of the 11th Voters day on January 25th 2021, the Election Commission of India launched the Digital EPIV (Voters Card).

The advantages of the e-EPIC:

- Alternate and faster mode of obtaining Digital Voter Card
- Download and Store on mobile/desktop
- Self-printable
- Secure: QR code with image and demographics. January 25th 2021 onwards for newly registered Voters



during the special summary revision of 2021 and having unique mobile number in E-Roll.

February 1st 2021 onwards for all other general voters.

The theme in this year's NVD is "Making our voters empowered, vigilant, safe and informed".

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Jaago Mumbaikar

Gerson daCunha, AGNI Trustee & Convenor

"Mumbai is a beautiful city, but a terrible place" – Architect Charles Correa.

What makes a city great is the way it looks after its people. In Mumbai, and by law, this is very largely the responsibility of the BMC, also known as MCGM. We the citizens of Mumbai periodically elect Corporators to the MCGM to help provide (what we hope will be) first rate services for our daily needs.

I am a member of **Jaago Mumbaikar**, a citizens' collective to improve the way Mumbai is run and our needs are served. Citizens have shown time and again how their votes in large numbers can dramatically improve delivery of civic services.

Elections will be here shortly. Your replies to the attached survey will air your needs and

how well / poorly the MCGM and its Corporators are doing what they should do for you. Your replies will be kept confidential and greatly help build the city we all deserve.

Please do share this with all Mumbaikars on your mailing list. Thanks

Kindly click on the link below to go to the survey. We believe that it should not take more than 10 minutes of your time.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6Q2YDG6>

Note: (One instrument - phone, laptop) will only allow one response. So please use different phones, computers for the same, if you are answering from the same household/office.

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Powai's citizens criticize hacking of trees on JVL

Pamela Cheema

Powai's citizens woke up one sunny morning to the shocking news that 728 trees on the Jogeshwari Vikhroli Link Road would be hacked or transplanted elsewhere. Notices were pasted on several trees on the JVL with the BMC claiming that a public consultation meeting had been held virtually whereas in reality, no citizen or stakeholder had any information about the same.

On January 7, 2021 Powai's air quality was 340, in the severe category, hence any depletion of its green cover will only knock this once-verdant suburb interminably into a vortex of poor quality air. Due to the pandemic and the shutting down of the local trains, the



JVL is in a permanent snarl of vicious traffic jams which along with the ill-advised construction of the Metro 6 are polluting this suburb. If the trees which mitigate the pollution are also cut or transplanted, the future is very bleak for this suburb. The MMRDA, the state government and the BMC have blatantly disregarded the views of their citizens on this crucial issue. Please listen in to:

<https://youtu.be/PZp510jaqmA>

Pamela Cheema is AGNI's Coordinator in S ward

Waste management in K(W) ward

 **Zahida Banatwala**

In its quest to reduce the burden on land fill sites the BMC attempted to connect with citizens of K (W) ward to strategize how they could take it forward. Like other residents of K West, I was invited to the Mayor Hall, at All India Institute Of Local Self Government, Juhu on January 9th 2021. The Assistant Municipal Commissioner of K (W) Shri Vishvas Mote, invited members of housing societies to participate and implement a strategy for bulk waste generators.



Shrimati Sudha Singh, Chairperson, Prabhag Samittee and Corporators, Ms. Renu Hansraj and Shri Rohan Rathod were present. There were also invitees on the dais like Afroz Shah, renowned for the Versova Beach and Mithi river clean up, Shri Subhash Dalvi, Officer On Special Duty and Shrimati Sneha Palnitkar, CEO Local Self Government.

Prominent local citizens present there were Mr Milind Kulkarni of Indian Oil Nagar CHS and Mr. Pinto from Vile Parle (W). They presented methods of promoting waste management offered by the BMC whereby societies are able to claim property tax rebates for generating zero garbage. They demonstrated ways to manage wet waste, dry waste, e-waste and domestic hazardous waste. It was an eye opener.

Shri Vishvas Mote informed the participants of efforts made by the BMC to reduce waste and that bulk generators, i.e. those generating more than 100kgs of waste, would have to give segregated waste only. He also informed that all gardens would have to build compost

pit and manage green waste. Mr. Mote shared that with all the efforts of the BMC and public, the quantity of garbage collected from K West had reduced considerably from 485 tons to 395 tons. He also informed citizens that the BMC even collects debris from housing societies for a small charge. Dry garbage collection has been streamlined and most areas have the van coming at least twice a week.

An 8 year old boy, Glen Pinto, and his father shared their experiences in waste management and how the children of their housing society were handling waste during the lockdown. They demonstrated that if tetra pak containers were collected they could be used to build benches. Both Mr. Afroz Shah and Mr. Dalvi, encouraged residents to consider declaring their



societies zero garbage. While the load going to the landfills has reduced considerably, it could be reduced further. While the BMC is going all out to ensure that garbage disposal and collection is well managed, it is now up to the citizens to lend support.

Zahida Banatwala is AGNI's Coordinator in K(W) ward

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"REFILL.... DON'T LANDFILL !!"

 **Lillian Pais**

Today's "use and throw culture" has resulted in landfills of non- biodegradable waste packaging, from where highly toxic leach percolates into our water bodies causing harm to life. In this distressing scenario we need to rethink "what we shop" to reduce waste reaching landfills.

The "refill concept" is not new to us. Original packaging such as milk bottles, aerated drinks and ink cartridges have long been swapped for lighter reusable packaging which is cost saving, as the refill pouch retails at a lower price than the standard plastic bottle while not sacrificing the quality of the product. A pouch is now an alternative refill pack to a standard plastic bottle and is increasingly popular.

A survey carried out in various grocery stores showed liquid and solid products like laundry detergent, fabric conditioner, skin lotion, razors purchased with refill blades are already sold in refill packs with a substantial difference in the per liter / unit price. Products like Cornflakes, Oats, Horlicks, Tea, Coffee, etc, are mostly sold in cardboard refill packs.

Worldwide more advanced sustainable refill options have been implemented. Some countries have introduced a "deposit system" where empty packaging is returned for cash back or coupons that can be redeemed for other purchases. Liquid cleaning agents are manufactured and supplied in a "10x concentration" which can be diluted by the customer at home to the required dilution to fill 10 bottles. The "In store self-dispense refilling" option for toiletries, detergents and for tea powder is popular.

We have found that the refill system has myriad benefits for

the consumer as well as manufacturers, distributors, and retailers. Refill packaging not only helps reduce the use of single-use plastic but it can also be a great opportunity to reduce household waste as well as reduce the amount of natural resources needed to package and deliver goods to the consumer. The reduction in transportation costs directly result in less fuel consumption. All these factors contribute to the reduced cost of the product for the consumer. If refillable packaging is designed carefully and applied to appropriate products it would reduce the carbon footprint of all manufacturers.

In India, four years ago the Indian Railways created a silent revolution by coming up with a comprehensive policy about installation of Water Vending Machines (WVMs) at railway stations across the country. Pure drinking water is provided in this manner for lesser price in comparison with packaged drinking water, while also eliminating the use of banned 200 ml plastic bottles used for packaging. Eco-friendly disposable tumblers of approved quality and design and water bottles of PET are used at these water vending machines. Hopefully the concept will be implemented across all railway stations in the country.


Buying a refill pack can save you several trips to that crowded marketplace as also precious time.

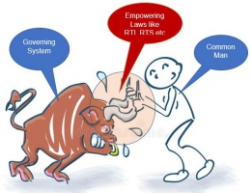
Adopt a refill habit!

Lillian Pais is AGNI's Coordinator in H(W) ward

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Stay Home Stay Safe

ALMs— how to form an ALM in your locality  **Apekshita Varshney, Citizen Matters - Editor's Note:** The article was very long and could not be accommodated in this newsletter. For further information please click on <https://mumbai.citizenmatters.in/concerned-citizens-work-alongside-the-municipality-story-of-alm-in-mumbai-22427>



Take the Bull by the Horns How to make the Governing System work for Citizens - 4

Shrikant Soman

In the previous three articles we reviewed the importance as well as the possibility of making our governing system work for citizens through assertive citizens' action. AGNI has been spearheading this movement for more than 20 years. It had the able leadership of the late Mr B.G.Deshmukh, Mr D.M.Sukhtankar and now, Mr Gerson DaCunha among others. It is has Coordinators across Mumbai doing field work.

In earlier articles the Right To Information Act popularly known as RTI was elaborated upon. In this article The Maharashtra Right to Public Service Act, 2015 - MRTPS also known as RTS will be discussed. This Act is complementary to RTI. If RTI is an ammunition, RTS is the gun/missile/battle tank which delivers ammunition to its target. RTS provides that the Government functions in a transparent, efficient and time bound manner. The objective of the Act is to empower citizens by improving the public grievance redressal system and enhancing the capacity of the public delivery system. It marks a paradigm shift because it gives citizens right to demand services and casts a statutory obligation on the government to provide public services within the prescribed time frame in an efficient and transparent manner. In order to supervise, monitor, regulate and improve overall delivery of public services by various departments of the state government, a Commission was constituted under the section 13 (1) of the Act and the State Chief Commissioner was appointed on 1st March 2017. The Commission is vested with the powers of the Civil Court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908. The Government is bound to consider and implement

recommendations of the Commission made under the section 16 of the MRTPS Act. The official tagline of the Commission is "Your Service is Our Duty."

The Collectors of all the districts have been appointed as the controlling officers and implementing authorities of the RTS Act. The designated officer is expected to address the complaint within a fixed time frame. The officers failing to deliver services as per the Act will face fines and disciplinary action. In the case of delay in providing services within the time frame or the denial of services without adequate justification, citizens can file first and second appeals with the senior officials within the same department. If not satisfied with their decision, citizens can file a third and final appeal before the Commission. There is also a timeframe specified even for disposal of these appeals as under:-

- First Appeal : Within 30 days
- Second Appeal : Within 45 days
- Third Appeal : Within 90 days

There is a serious need to spread the awareness of this Act and its mode of functionality with the general public. This Act is an enabling legislation which gives power to the lay man for demanding and getting timely services from the government. The government is no more to be looked at as an institution burdened with a slow functioning bureaucracy but as an efficient institution oriented towards giving service to its citizens just like any commercial organisation is expected to give quality service to its customers This is a paradigm shift of perspective of the whole functioning of our governing system.

In the next article we will review a very **Contd. on Page 4**

Civic Officials and Corporator extend help in R(N)

Willie Shirsat

Blue Grotto housing society in R(N) faced massive sewage problems for over a year. We then approached our corporator, BMC and other senior officials who extended generous help to solve this chronic problem. A ton of debris and silt was removed



from the chambers which have now stopped overflowing. The housing society is grateful for the extensive efforts

by the BMC officials and the corporator to mitigate this problem.

Willie Shirsat is AGNI's Coordinator in R(N)

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First community garden in Bandra (W)

Mario Fishery

Our ALM Team met with the garden department and proposed the idea of a community garden in our neighbourhood. The garden



will have Chilli trees, Lemon trees along with Karipata trees for everyone to use and most importantly take care of.

Blue Nile, Montinho, Ben-O-lill have volunteered to take care of the trees and water them daily. The ALM team is excited



about this very first community garden in Bandra.

Mario Fishery is AGNI's volunteer in H(W) ward

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Great leaders don't tell you what to do... they show you how it's done.



Be a leader & start segregating your waste & the others will follow you.

An appeal for donations

AGNI is a movement managed and run by volunteers. Being a voluntary movement, AGNI needs the support and contribution of every citizen to continue its work. Citizens are invited to contribute their indispensable ideas, time, effort and financial support. Send Cheque / DD in favour of "AGNI" to any of our Ward Coordinators as listed on Page 4 or to AGNI Office: Chadha

Bldg, 1st Floor, Plot no. 95, Wadala (West), Mumbai 400 031
Bank Details for donations transferred electronically:

Account Name: AGNI, SB A/c No.: 000710210000005

Bank of India, Breach Candy Branch, Mumbai 400 026.

NEFT / IFSC: BKID0000007

AGNI is a Charitable Trust. Donations are eligible for exemption under 80G of the Income Tax Act.

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A VERY BIG THANK YOU
for Donations received

in the month of January 2021:

Suresh Nangia Rs.10,000/=

Lavlesh Rama Lala Rs.1,000/=

Nature Walk through Mangroves at Kandarpada, Dahisar

Shrikant Soman

The Kandarpada Residents Association has nearly 200 members from more than 75 housing societies in the area. I am the Convener of this group.



There is an offshoot of this group called 'Nature Lovers of Dahisar'.



A trek in the mangroves was organised on January 17, 2021. Nearly 60 residents—young and old— participated in this trek. Most of them participated



in a walk through the mangroves for the first time although they had stayed in the neighbourhood for many years. They enjoyed the trek



immensely and were eager participants in small talk on the crucial importance of mangroves in a coastal ecosystem.

Shrikant Soman is AGNI's Coordinator in R(N)

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National Voters Day January 25th

Willie Shirsat

As AGNI'S Coordinator I was invited by the ERO to their office at 153, Dahisar Vidhan Sabha and felicitated by the



Chief ERO, Mr Vidyadhar Vaishampyan for the extensive help by AGNI volunteers during



the last election registration drive. He asked his staff to coordinate with AGNI and other NGOs for the successful working of ERO office 153.

Willie Shirsat is AGNI's Coordinator in R(N)

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Take the Bull by the Horns

Contd. From Page 3 important arm of the RTS – the Citizens Charter. The concept of Citizens' Charter enshrines the trust between the service provider and its users. The concept was first articulated and implemented in the United Kingdom by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 to continuously improve the quality of public services for the people of the country so that these services respond to the needs and wishes of the users. It specifies time bound delivery of services by each department of the government.

Shrikant Soman is AGNI's Coordinator in R(N)

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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	jenniferagni@gmail.com
D	Malabar Hill, Mahalaxmi, Opera House, Girgaum	Theo D'Souza	9820303940	theomdsouza@gmail.com
F/North	Sion, Wadala, Matunga (E), Dadar (E), Antop Hill	Nikhil Desai	9819930405	n.c.desai2012@gmail.com
G/North	Mahim, Dadar (W), Matunga West, Dharavi	Bulu Saldanha	9920323831	bulu_saldhana@yahoo.com
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