

Mumbai Meri Jaan



Forward This To All - And All Forward - Together



Priority for senior citizens in Bombay High Court

For the convenience of senior citizens, Bombay High Court has decided to give priority in its roster to the cases where at least one of the parties is above sixty years old, if such a request is made by the concerned party.

A circular issued on December 3, 2019 signed by the Registrar General of the Bombay High court, says that the Chief Justice and other Judges of the Bombay High Court, have directed that precedence be given to the cases wherein senior citizens are involved. "The Chief Justice and Judges have now directed that precedence be given by courts for hearing and final disposal of the cases wherein one of the parties has attained the age of sixty years and above," directs the circular. This circular replaces a circular issued in 1999, whereby precedence was to be given to persons above 65. "The courts may grant such an indulgence on written request," noted the circular.

The direction would be implemented at all the benches of the High Court and the subordinate courts in the state.

The Principal Judge of the Bombay City Civil and Sessions court, Shalini Phansalkar-Joshi, has issued the direction that the circular should be followed.

With inputs from Rajkumar Sharma, AGNI Coordinator, M (E & W) ward

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We wish all our readers
A Very Happy
and
A Prosperous 2020

Rebuilding municipal schools

In a long conversation, K(W) AGNI coordinator, Zahida Banatwalla explains to Pamela Cheema how municipal schools can be rebuilt on modern specifications and thus benefit their students.

● How did you adopt the BMC school in your ward as the model school for your pilot project? Was any other a part of this project?

Most of us are members of the Juhu Citizens' Welfare Group (JCWG) and we are also associated with the Gandhi Gram Municipal School as it is our polling booth. We have also been having ALM meetings for over a decade now and that makes it easier for us to take such decisions. In 2007 an NGO named Nagrik Satta was formed for the purpose of adopting the school to impart English medium education in the institution.

● Could you elaborate on JCWG's association with the



school and how that helped the school to improve.

Since funds are always a constraint we, the members of JCWG, have been assisting the Managing Committee to raise funds or introduce sponsors for various events or activities. However, over many years we witnessed the deteriorating condition of the school, with plaster falling and metal rods exposed. After taking a site inspection **Contd. on Page 4**

Miyawaki plantations in Powai, S ward

Pamela Cheema

Urban forests being planted according to the Miyawaki method of plantation is one of the projects being actively supported by the Municipal Commissioner, Mr Pardeshi. The Miyawaki method of plantation has been propagated by the internationally acclaimed Japanese botanist, Akira Miyawaki, who has also been awarded the Asahi prize and The Blue Planet prize. Across the world Mr Miyawaki has disseminated information and encouraged ventures which support the growth of natural vegetation on degraded land.

Powai in S ward is one of the few suburbs in Mumbai which will soon boast Miyawaki forests. When the Municipal Commissioner expressed his interest **Contd. on Page 3**

RTI Users: Blackmailers and Extortionists

Shailesh Gandhi, Former Central Information Commissioner

In a recent RTI related case filed by Anjali Bhardwaj, the CJI is reported to have said on December 16 2019: "We are not against the right to information. But there is a need for guidelines. It cannot be an unbridled right." It has also been stated that there should be locus for seeking information and that the administration is almost coming to a standstill because nobody is willing to take decisions. The Court should read Justice Mathews pronouncement and many of its judgments given before the RTI Act 2005 was implemented. The bridle is provided by Article 19 (2) and the guidelines are given in the law passed by

parliament. It might also be pointed out that there is almost no known instance of government getting paralyzed in legitimate work. The RTI is an impediment for the corrupt or arbitrary use of power.

RTI is a fundamental right of citizens under Article 19 (1)(a). By a plethora of Supreme Court judgments it has been recognized that Article 19 (1)(a) includes the right to free speech, right to publishing and right to information. The only permissible restrictions on the right under Article 19 (1)(a) are given in Article 19 (2). It stands to reason that the restrictions or curbs on the right to free speech, publishing and information must be uniform,

and any curbs on one will apply to the others. Besides, the rights and importance of media arise primarily from the fact that it is the medium through which citizens right to be informed is met. Hence the citizen's right to information cannot be rated lower than the media's right to publish.

Let us now look at the charge that RTI is becoming a tool of blackmailers and extortionists. When a person speaks he can make allegations against any person or institution and this could do some damage. Allegations, innuendoes and charges can also be published and this can do greater damage. The publishing maybe on the **Contd. on Page 2**

Swachha Mumbai Abhiyaan

Waste Management seminar at Wadala

 **Chirag Dedhia**

Rotary Club of Bombay Uptown and Rotary Club of Mumbai Green City co-organised WAMAC Seminar on 22nd December at Karve Garden, Wadala West. It was an excellent informative seminar

of Waste Management, Segregation, Use of Waste, various Myths that people have in their minds.

Several learned and environmental specialists had come from all over Mumbai to conduct the Seminar, including

Wet waste collection



Collection: Covered bin in Kitchen lined with newspaper. Tear newspaper lengthwise to get 2 long pieces. Place them into the bin to cover the bin inner surface. **NO PLASTIC BAGS!**

household level. My myth that the entire society / building needs to get together for this was busted and I now know

that I can do it at my own home, the method and I can put it to practice.

Starting 12-Jan-2020, every 2nd and 4th Sunday, Rotary Experts on Waste Management will be available at Karve Garden, Wadala West to help citizens of entire Mumbai to guide, mentor and resolve any issues that citizens face. Let us take advantage of their availability and close proximity to Wadala and make our own home one that produces Zero Garbage.

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representative from the BMC explaining its benefits and how citizens can get the Property Tax Rebate by following the Waste Management methods.

Residents of Parle shared their experiences at this Seminar and one Mr. Yogen Parikh made a 35 slide presentation. Those interested in getting this presentation may contact Editor, MMJ at mmj.agni@gmail.com.

Most importantly it was found that the methods were simple, doable, and achievable in a short span of time at each

Recommended segregation system for homes



Basket with sieve for Wet Waste	Cotton Bag for Dry Paper	Cotton Bag for Dry Plastic	Cardboard Box for E-Waste	Basket for Mix Dry Waste
Wet waste collected from homes daily. Basket can be covered with dry sheet of newspaper from inside if necessary	Collect dry paper in this bag & empty it in society Paper bin as and when bag is full.	Collect dry plastic articles in this bag and empty it in society Dry bin as and when bag is full.	Collect all e-Waste articles in this bag and empty it in society Dry bin as and when it is full	Collect all other mix dry waste in this basket. It is collected from homes as per society schedule.

RTI Users: Blackmailers and Extortionists

Contd. from Page 1 traditional media, web portals or social media. When allegations are published it can do great damage and harm. Yet, in the last seventy years the scope of right to speech and publishing have greatly expanded. That sometimes these have been used to blackmail someone cannot be ruled out. Besides the practice of 'paid news' is well founded. But nobody has espoused the cause of constricting these. We do not have the label blackmailer or extortionists hurled at the class of people engaging in free speech or publishing.

However within 14 years a very strong narrative is being built to condemn Right to Information. RTI users have been labelled blackmailers and extortionists. Let us examine a little closely, what a citizen can

do using RTI. He can only seek information which is on records. Some harm may come only if the records show an illegal or corrupt act. It is alleged that some people get information about such actions using RTI and then blackmail the wrongdoers. While such acts of blackmailing are certainly undesirable, this can be done by speaking or publishing as well. Let us look at this from another angle. A person who engages in wrongdoing or a corrupt action is depriving society or an individual. It should be the work of society and the government to stop such undesirable actions. Our entire mechanism of vigilance departments, Anti-corruption Bureau, Central Bureau of Investigation, CVC and Lokpal is not able to expose and stop this. Many RTI users expose the wrongs and share the information publicly. Some may use the information for

undesirable personal enrichment. However, should our concern be more about the wrongdoer who is unfairly robbing society, or on someone who may be picking his pocket? There is something that reflects poorly on our society which expresses greater concern about the pickpocket than the wrongdoer.

The truth is all our vigilance measures have not brought down the harassment and bribe extraction from the middle and lower economic classes. We must recognize that our best vigilance monitors are the citizens using RTI who have also unearthed some major scams.

RTI activists have been persuading the government to put most information on the website as per the mandate of Section 4 of the RTI Act. If governments go completely paperless and digital, it would be easy to put most information on the website. At

the very least most of the information and dashboards presently on computers should be available to citizens. This is not being done. Another simple way to stop all blackmailing using RTI information would be to put all RTI applications and responses on the websites in a searchable manner. DOPT and many State governments have issued instructions for this. But this is not being implemented since this would expose the wrong and illegal actions. Citizens, media and courts should put pressure on the government to implement this properly. Citizens need to get accountability from the government and for this they need to get more information.

We must get accountability from our government by using RTI. Our job does not end with voting but starts. This is 'rule of the people, by the people, for the people.' The citizens fulfill their role as the rulers of the nation by using RTI.

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A VERY BIG THANK YOU for donation received in December 2019 from:- **Shrikant Soman Rs.1004/=**

Active Wadala Citizens Box Cricket Tournament

Anil Jain

The Wadala Sports League, a body formed under the aegis of Wadala (W) Citizens Forum organised its second edition of Box Cricket tournament on Sunday the 1st December, 2019 at St Joseph's School Turf ground from 8.00 am to 12.00 pm.

A total of eight teams of 10 players each participated in the tournament. The event was organised to bring Wadalaites together, know each other, interact and work for the betterment of Wadala. The event was highly appreciated by all and a good



Winner : Wadala Royal



Runner UP : Wadala Challengers

crowd was present. Our corporator, Mr. Amey Ghole, graced the occasion and even tried his hand at cricket. The atmosphere was congenial.

For a change, awards and trophies were presented the following Sunday at a separate function in the presence of family and friends of the participants. The winners were Wadala Royal team while the Runners Up were Wadala Challengers. Awards were also given to the Best Batsman, Best Bowler and Man of the Series.

The Wadala Forum through such initiatives is growing strong and effective.

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Garden under Dadar TT flyover to open on Jan. 15, 2020

Built at a cost of Rs 3.77 crore, the 266-metre garden will have an amphitheatre, walkway, jogging track, play area for children and a sitting area for senior citizens

Linah Baliga

Buoyed by the success of the garden under-flyover project in Matunga, the BMC will throw open a garden under the Nana Jagannath Shankar Seth flyover, popularly called the Dadar TT flyover, on January 15. The brainchild of Shiv Sena corporator, Amey Ghole, the 266-metre garden has been built at a cost of Rs 3.77 crore. Unlike the one in Matunga, it is divided into five zones, with four sections on the side of Khodadad circle. Additionally, there is a sitting area close to the Shivneri bus terminal and two play zones for kids.

"It will be a one-of-its-kind centre for recreation in Dadar east with an amphitheatre, walkway, jogging track, play area for children and sitting area for senior citizens. The children's section will have a two-step stage for arts and crafts with the floor resembling popular board games ludo and



snakes and ladders," said a civic official from BMC's garden department.

While the Matunga garden has a continuous jogging track, modelled on the flow of the Narmada river, in Dadar, the aim is to have maximum greenery to minimise effects of pollution. "Thanks to the new garden, we got rid of encroachers who had occupied the space for years. It used to be an open-air urinal with an unbearable stench all through the day and night," said Nikhil Desai, AGNI Coordinator of F(north) ward about the Matunga flyover garden.

Desai said the BMC should increase the number of streetlights for people to feel safe while they are walking at

LACC meeting of R/N ward nos 1,2,7 & 8

Willie Shirshat

The Local Area Citizens Committee meeting of R/N ward nos 1,2,7, and 8 was held recently and chaired by the newly appointed E E Navghare. One of the corporators, Ms Sheetal Mhatre of ward 7 was also present at the meeting. The status report of long pending issues was discussed



at this meeting. It was disclosed that robotic machines to clean drains had failed and the BMC was checking out other alternatives. The standardization of vendors has been stalled temporarily, according to the corporator Sheetal Mhatre as the BMC is discussing the issue of inducting corporators in the Town Vending Committees. Further it was agreed that drain covers of metal or cement would be provided wherever they were missing. It was agreed that LACC meetings would be conducted on the first and third Saturdays of every month. It was agreed that more toilets would be constructed in the wards and that garden waste would be picked up routinely on Mondays and Thursdays every week. **Willie Shirshat is AGNI's Coordinator R/North Ward**

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night. Lack of proper lighting arrangements at the garden under the Matunga flyover deters girls from using it at night. "There must be CCTV cameras and security guards to monitor the sections for senior citizens and children. The BMC should ensure there are no leakages from the flyover during monsoon. This garden under the Dadar TT flyover is a wonderful gift for Dadar-Matunga residents in the new year," said Desai.

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Miyawaki plantations in Powai, S ward

Contd. from Page 1 in the project and earmarked several suburbs for these urban forests, AGNI in S ward strongly proposed that the forests be planted on the banks of Lake



Powai's first Miyawaki plantation

Powai. While the first plantation is being carried out in an MCGM garden in 700 sq. ft of space, Lake Powai is slated to get its own urban forests soon. This forest is being created by the BMC in collaboration with NGOs Nature Forever Society and Nature India Ecosolutions. The corporate sponsor is Crisil which is using its CSR funds for the plantation of trees and maintenance of natural ecosystems. Crisil will maintain the plantation for two years.

More than 64 species of trees native to Mumbai are being used in this first plantation in Powai. No horticultural practices or chemicals will be used in this urban forest. According to the experts working on the project, a minimum of 30-40 native species of trees are required for the plantation to be a success.

Powai looks forward to its first Miyawaki forest with great pride!

Pamela Cheema is AGNI'S Coordinator S ward

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BMC cuts Rs 200 crore funds for open spaces

While the BMC proposes to splurge Rs 35 crore on creating Miyawaki forests in the city's parks and gardens, it has shrunk its budget for the upkeep of the open spaces by over Rs 200 crore. This will affect the development and maintenance of over 250 parks and gardens in the city, including the popular ones such as Jogger's Park in Bandra, Bhakti Park in Wadala and Byculla's PT Mane garden.

According to civic body officials, the instruction was issued by Municipal Commissioner **contd on Page 4**

Rebuilding municipal schools

Contd. from Page 1 with the then AMC, Prashant Gaikwad, many classrooms had to be shut down and metal supports placed in the building. While the school carried on with its classes the building itself became a security risk for the children who are about 1200 in number as well as the staff.

● **How did the school progress over the years? Was the structure dilapidated? How did you help to improve the school? What was the process followed to rebuild the school?**

The school grew in numbers with the children showing great academic progress over the years, thanks to the efforts of the teachers. Along with academics, the school had many extracurricular activities too. You could always see happy faces of the children at school. However, the structure itself became a matter of great concern and this was brought to the notice of BMC officials and elected representatives. The structure is about 40 years old and repairs have been done just once during this period. A site inspection with the AO of

BMC schools and engineers along with the Councillor and members of JCWG started the process of repairs in the school. However, at a JCWG meeting, it was decided that MLA Ameet Satam would be requested to take a site inspection. Mr Satam, along with Ms Renu Hansraj, corporator, Ward 69 and BMC engineers inspected the premises and Mr Satam asked for a panel of IIT Bombay engineers to prepare a structural audit. Within three weeks the school was declared dilapidated by the IIT engineers and they advised that it should be demolished and reconstructed. The MLA and the BMC put up a sign board that the school had to be shut down.

● **How did you rehabilitate the children of the school?**

That was a humungous task as we now had to accommodate students of three educational streams English, Marathi and Hindi in BMC schools close by. That itself was a challenge as all BMC schools, barring a few, are pretty much in the same

condition. After great efforts by the MLA, the councillor, the administrative and teaching staff of the school and JCWG members, a comprehensive list was prepared to accommodate children in various schools keeping in mind that their homes were in the same area as we did not want drop-outs in the school due to this reason.

● **How has the BMC proposed to reconstruct the school?**

The entire process has been a great learning experience. Tenders were floated to demolish and reconstruct the school. The BMC has specifications about constructing a school with specific classroom sizes, staircases, separate toilets for boys and girls. We have been assured that the BMC is moving with the times and that newly built schools will have bright and airy classrooms with libraries, laboratories, auditoriums, etc.

● **When will the school be ready for occupation?**

We have been assured that the school will be ready in a year and a half.

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BMC cuts Rs 200 crore for open spaces

contd from Page 3 Praveen Pardeshi. "The gardens department had floated tenders to spruce up 250 open spaces for which it had set aside Rs 300 crore. The work also involved building new amenities like toilets, repairing compound walls, constructing walking tracks and setting up gymnasiums. But now we have been asked to carry out only basic maintenance. So, the value of the contract has reduced to just Rs 100 crore," said a senior civic official.

Additionally, the BMC has also reduced the period of maintenance from three years to just one year. "The original tenders had a maintenance component for three years. But now contractors will be appointed for just one year. We are told that since a new policy to adopt open spaces is in the works, wherein plots will be given out to private parties, there is no need for maintenance for three years," the official added.

At a time when the BMC administration flagged concerns about an impending fund crunch facing the state government, it will spend Rs 35 crore on creating urban forests in the city's existing open spaces. The corporation is appointing contractors to plant trees using the Miyawaki concept in around 60 parks and gardens. Apart from giving Rs 35 crore to contractors, the civic body will spend further on a consultant, who will oversee the tree plantation process.

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

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