

MUMBAI MERI JAAN

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF AGNI



Editorial

ECI to provide Mobile Deposit Facility for voters at polling stations - Rationalises norms for Canvassing

In line with various initiatives aimed at enhancing voter convenience and streamlining poll day arrangements, the Election Commission has issued two more comprehensive instructions for providing mobile deposit facility for voters just outside the polling stations and rationalising norms for canvassing. The instructions are in line with the relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.

Recognising the increasing coverage and usage of mobile phones in both urban and rural areas and the challenges faced not only by the voters at large but also by senior citizens, women, and PwD electors in managing mobile phones on the poll day, the Commission has decided to allow a mobile deposit facility just outside the polling stations. Only mobile phones shall be allowed within 100 meters of the polling station and that too in switched-off mode. Very simple pigeonhole boxes or jute bags shall be provided near the entrance door of the polling station where the voters would be required to deposit their mobile phones. Mobile phones shall not be allowed to be carried inside the polling station by the voter. However, certain Polling Stations can be exempted from this provision based on adverse local circumstances by the Returning Officer. Rule 49M of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, which ensures secrecy of voting within the polling station, will continue to be strictly enforced.

Further, in a move aimed at improving election day facilitation, the Commission has rationalised the permissible norms for canvassing in line with the electoral laws to 100 meters from the entrance of the polling station. However, electioneering shall not be allowed within a 100-meter radius around the Polling Station on the day of poll. Therefore, the booths set up by the candidates on poll day for issuing unofficial identity slips to electors, in case the electors are not carrying their official Voter Information Slips (VIS) issued by the Commission, can now be set up just beyond 100 meters of any polling station.

The Election Commission of India, under the Chairmanship of Chief Election Commissioner Shri Gyanesh Kumar along with Election Commissioners Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Dr. Vivek Joshi, remains committed to conducting elections strictly in accordance with the legal framework, while continuously innovating to improve the facilities for the voters.

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Supreme Court directs holding of Maharashtra local body polls with OBC reservation before Banthia Commission report

[Ravikiran Deshmukh](#)

The Supreme Court also directed Maharashtra to notify the local body polls within 4 weeks, complete it within 4 months.

The Supreme Court on 6th May directed the State Election Commission to notify local body elections in Maharashtra, held up on account of challenge to reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) since 2022, within 4 weeks and hold within four months. The top court said the outcome of the elections would be subject to the court's final decision on the pending challenge to the state law extending 27% reservation for OBC in local body polls.

A bench headed by justice Surya Kant passed the order since elections to the local bodies have been stuck due to the top court's status quo order of August 2022. Some of these local bodies have not had elections at panchayat

and gram sabha levels for the last five years.

In an interim direction passed in the matter, the bench, also comprising justice N Kotiswar Singh said, "In our opinion, the constitutional mandate of grass root democracy through periodical election of local bodies ought to be respected and ensured since elected bodies have a prescribed term and no irreversible damage will be caused."

It directed the Maharashtra State Election Commission to notify the local body polls within four weeks. On the contentious issue of OBC reservation, the order said, "The reservation will be provided to the OBC community as existed in the state prior to the Bainthia Commission report."

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Maharashtra government approves increase in document handling charges for sale & purchase of properties

Citizens will have to pay more when registering an agreement for the sale or purchase of properties. The state has approved a hike in document handling charges from Rs 20 to Rs 40 per page of the agreement.

People who visit the registration offices have to make three types of payments – the stamp duty, registration fee, and document handling

charges. While the stamp duty and registration fee go to the state kitty, the document handling charges are recovered by the software company that handles the computerisation of the entire process of registration.

The state revenue department, while issuing the government resolution (GR), has said that the current charges of **Contd. on Page 4**

RIGHT TO SERVICES ACT

[Zahida Banatwala, AGNI Trustee](#)

On 15th May, 2025, Mumbai First under the aegis, of Mumbai Happenings 5th edition, held a workshop to propagate a very important ACT which was passed in April of 2015.

The ACT has 1023 services available to the citizens at the

click of button <https://aaplesarkar.mahaonline.gov.in/> **Contd. on Page 4**



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Residents, activists petition CM to save Powai lake from water hyacinth menace

 Dhairya Gajara

Powai residents and green activists have launched a campaign to save Powai Lake from the harmful water weed that has engulfed the scenic lake. While the locals have started an online petition, activists have written to the chief minister and municipal commissioner demanding immediate actions to save the biodiversity spot.

Local residents of Powai and environmentalists have launched a series of campaigns to save Powai Lake, spread across 200 hectares, and its biodiversity as they allege that the civic authorities are not taking any action to clean the water body which has been engulfed by water hyacinth. Residents allege that the lake, which was



once a beautiful sprawling wetland, now presents a pathetic view.

The residents have come together to create a #SavePowaiLake forum to address the issue and seek immediate attention to the worsening condition of the lake. Under the forum, the residents have launched a social media campaign. started an online petition and written letters to CM Devendra Fadnavis and Brihanmumbai Municipal Commissioner.

NatConnect Foundation, which is also a part of the forum, has written to CM Fadnavis urging him to step in and order the civic authorities to clear the invasive water plant. In his letter to the CM and the commissioner of Brihanmumbai Municipal



Corporation, he highlighted the environmental impact of the water weed on aquatic life as the plant blocks sunlight into the lake. Powai Lake alone acts as a habitat for a wealth of species, including the Indian Marsh Crocodile, various kinds of fish and a plethora of bird species.

Talking to The Free Press Journal, B.N. Kumar, director of NatConnect Foundation, said, "The authorities seem to have neglected the menacing plants which are up to the brim of the wetland. There have been promises to beautify the lake, but only on paper. The officials need to check if any sewer lines are opening into the lake as the hyacinth growth has not been under check. We wonder as to why it has not caught the attention of any of the officials, Ministers or elected representatives."

The residents have also launched an online petition requesting the CM to intervene and direct the civic body to take action. The petition launched on Saturday had received close to 1,000 signatures by Sunday evening. They have also launched a social media campaign spreading awareness among people about the issue. Milan Bhat, a resident of Hiranandani Gardens who launched the campaign, wrote, "We care about Powai Lake because it's more than just water. It's life, history, and hope. Your voice matters too! Share your thoughts on why Powai Lake is important to you. Let's come **Contd on Pg 4**

Upgraded Mumbai Stations Revamped Under Amrit Bharat Scheme

 Kamal Mishra

The upgradation work of Chinchpokli, Parel, Wadala Road, and Matunga stations in the Mumbai Division of Central Railways under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme has been completed. The total cost of upgrading these stations, collectively exceeding Rs 71 crore, was initiated with foundation stones laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to officials, the upgradation work at these Central Railway stations was completed in just 15 months. "These stations have undergone substantial redevelopment to enhance passenger amenities and station aesthetics. The improvements are part of the Central Government's ambitious Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, which aims to transform railway stations into world-class transit hubs" he said.

Chinchpokli Station — Upgradation Cost: Rs 11.81 Crore



With a daily footfall of 36,696 passengers, Chinchpokli station has seen a transformation focused on passenger comfort. Key enhancements include the renovation of elevated booking offices, new platform flooring, and improved drinking water and seating facilities. The station's circulating areas now feature vertical gardens, artistic 3D wall paintings, tensile fabric umbrellas, and beautified staircases. A vertical garden and spider glazing now adorn the CSMT-



end FOB, adding both function and flair.

Parel Station — Upgradation Cost: Rs 19.41 Crore

Serving 47,738 passengers daily, Parel now boasts a new



station building, elevated parking, a modern toilet block with an STP, and extensive landscaping at both ends of the tracks. The station's east side includes a PCC road, upgraded drainage, and boundary walls enhanced with vertical gardens. The newly constructed SM office and improved gardening along the tracks contribute to the station's revitalized look.

Wadala Road Station — Upgradation Cost: Rs 23.02 Crore



Handling a heavy daily traffic of 1.32 lakh passengers, Wadala Road has received one of the most comprehensive upgrades. Renovations include new and repaired COPs, full **Contd on Pg 4**

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Colaba, Cuffe Parade residents move supreme court against proposed passenger jetty near Gateway of India allege environmental and heritage damage

 **Urvi Mahajani**

After failing to get urgent relief from the Bombay High Court, the residents of Colaba and Cuffe Parade have approached the Supreme Court against the order of the Bombay High Court refusing stay on the proposed passenger jetty and terminal near the Gateway of India.

Three residents of Colaba and Cuffe Parade, representing over 150 individuals and businesses, have approached the apex court seeking a stay on the piling work that has commenced at the site. The plea was filed on Wednesday and as per the Supreme Court website, it is likely to be heard next week.

The project, to be built approximately 280 metres away from the monument and near the Radio Club, includes lounges, ticket counters, offices, shops, and parking for 150 vehicles.

The residents have challenged the high court order of May 8 by which the bench headed by Chief Justice Alok Aradhe had refused to grant an interim stay on the construction, observing that the project appears to be in public interest.

The bench issued notices to relevant authorities and directed them to file detailed responses but refused to halt work for now. The next hearing is scheduled for June 16.

Just a day before that, on May 7, the HC had refused similar relief in another petition by Clean and Heritage Colaba Residents Association (CHCRA) observing that “the project is in public interest”. The CHCRA, through Advocate Prerak Chaudhary, have opposed the project.

The residents have sought an urgent stay contending that once the piling work starts, it will be nearly impossible to remove the same and will cause significant damage to the environment, apart from defacing the heritage precinct.

Their plea has challenged the project citing environmental impact, restricted public access, and traffic congestion. The petition contests various clearances granted to the project, including Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) approval by the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority (MCZMA), a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Heritage Conservation Committee in February, and a traffic NOC issued on January 28.

Moreover, the residents have contested that there was no public consultation, despite the BMC's NOC clearly mandating it. Residents are stakeholders too, yet no notices were issued. The residents have also raised the issue about traffic and emergency access, noting that congestion — especially during holidays — has previously blocked fire brigades and ambulances.

The Maharashtra government has also assured the high court that a section of the wall near the Gateway of India, marked for demolition as part of a passenger jetty project, will not be broken before June 20. Also, the government has clarified that it is not intended solely for VIPs but is meant for the general public too.

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Maharashtra cabinet unveils EV policy 2025 with tax waivers, toll exemptions and infra push

 **Kalpesh Mhamunkar**

In a major step towards sustainable transportation, the state Cabinet on Tuesday approved the Maharashtra Electric Vehicles Policy 2025, aimed at boosting electric vehicle (EV) adoption and manufacturing across the state. The policy, which will be effective until 2030, includes a provision of Rs1,993 crore over the next five years for its implementation.

The policy focuses on expanding EV charging infrastructure, encouraging environmentally sustainable and innovative transport solutions, and enhancing energy security and economic growth. The state government anticipates a significant surge in the use and sales of electric vehicles as a result.

According to transport minister Pratap Sarnaik, “All electric vehicles sold and registered in Maharashtra will be exempt from motor vehicle tax, registration certificate fees, and renewal charges. Charging stations will be set up at every 25 km along state and national highways.

Sarnaik also informed that subsidies will be given for vehicle purchase in the state. A 10% subsidy on the base price will be offered for electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, non-transport four-wheelers, state transport buses (M3, M4), and buses used in private,



state, or urban transport services.

A 15% subsidy will be granted on electric goods vehicles including three-wheelers, M1 category transport four-wheelers, light commercial vehicles (N2, N3), and agricultural EVs like electric tractors and harvesters.

To promote EV, the state government has decided to give toll exemptions to the E-vehicles. “Full toll exemption for electric four-wheel passenger vehicles and buses on the Mumbai-Pune Yashwantrao Chavan Expressway, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Shivdi-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu, and the Hindu Hridayasamrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samruddhi Mahamarg. The loss of toll companies will be borne by the government,” added Sarnaik.

A 50% toll discount will be provided to electric four-wheelers on other state and national highways under the Public Works Department.

The policy also introduces a clean mobility transition model, which targets a drastic reduction in carbon emissions, air pollutants, and greenhouse gases from the transport sector by 2030.

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A VERY BIG THANK YOU
for Donations received

Mr. Dinesh Ahir Rs.25,000/=
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RIGHT TO SERVICES ACT

Contd. from Page 1

It was heartening to note that on a working day 200+ citizens participated in the very interactive session with the esteemed panel:-

Shri Manu Kumar Srivastav, I.A.S.(Retd.) Chief Commissioner, Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Services



2. Shri Baldev Singh, I.A.S.(Retd.) State Commissioner for Right to Service, Konkan Revenue Division

3. Shri Dilip Shinde, I.A.S. (Retd.) State Commissioner for Right to Service, Pune Revenue Division

The session was moderated by Mr. Sanjay Ubale, Executive Board Member, Mumbai First. During the session citizens present were made aware of the tools to access government services in a transparent, efficient and time bound manner

There was a live demo of the site with step by step instruc-



tions on how to register and avail of the services. We were also informed that the website is being upgraded and soon we would have a smoother interface.

The interest and enthusiasm the citizens generated was amazing. The interest generated was both from senior citizens' men and women so also Gen Z. College students seemed to be using the services frequently.

Many of us at AGNI had the privilege of participating in this much-needed awareness program.

We look forward to the next session and are committed to creating awareness about the same.

Citizens thank Mumbai First for this much needed awareness program.

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Upgraded stations

Contd from Pg 2 platform flooring, drainage improvements, and a new toilet block with an STP. The Mumbai-end FOB has been strengthened and beautified, while booking offices and entry gates have undergone complete refurbishment

Matunga Station — Upgradation Cost: Rs 17.28 Crore



India's first all-women operated station, Matunga, now stands as a model of inclusive and sustainable development. With a daily footfall of 37,927, the station has seen flooring upgrades, new toilet blocks, Divyangjan-friendly improvements, and the restoration of its wooden-arch main building. A vertical garden, enhanced booking offices, and vibrant 3D wall art have uplifted the station's aesthetics and utility.

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Save Powai lake from water hyacinth

Contd from Pg 2 together to protect and revive this precious ecosystem."

Residents have alleged that they have requested the BMC but there has been no action. They have also alleged that none of the elected representatives have also paid heed to the issue. "We have been pleading with the civic officials for long yet there is no action," lamented Pamela Cheema, convenor of the #SavePowaiLake Forum.

According to the Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai has lost about 40% of its biodiversity in the past decade alone. Unchecked development projects, untreated industrial waste, encroachments in reserved biodiversity zones, and inconsiderate littering have made the situation increasingly dire.

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Increase in document handling charges for sale & purchase of properties

Contd. from Page 1 Rs 20 were fixed in 2001 when the state government approved a BOT (build, operate and transfer) based project for the registration of documents. The charges since 2001 have remained unchanged, and now a revision is necessary, given the increasing costs of software development, as well as the costs for the data centre and server infrastructure for the web-based system.

The hike is also necessary due to the support system developed for the efficient working of the registration system of registration along with the increased costs of software, hardware, network, and server.

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