

# Mumbai Meri Jaan



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



## Editorial

### BMC Elections 2022

#### Political parties take note – put good candidates lest Mumbaikars vote NOTA!

Mumbai is abominably served by its municipality. It will only go downhill if the slide is not arrested. The good thing about the pandemic is that it has served to show up the disaster that is the BMC, said Gerson daCunha, Trustee & Convenor, AGNI.

A Think Tank BMC Elections 2022 committee of Mumbaikars and citizen groups across the city has been formed with Mr. Gerson daCunha as the Convenor. This committee will analyse, research, motivate, mobilize and guide the middle and upper middle (MUM) classes to participate in the coming Mumbai civic election and vote for good candidates with integrity, irrespective of the party to which they belong. If, however the parties don't put up clean and good candidates, Mumbaikars, who are now politically mature, will not hesitate to press the NOTA button on the EVMs.

In 2018, the State Election Commission, which is responsible for local civic elections in the state, passed an order that if NOTA gets the maximum vote in any constituency there will be a repoll in that constituency. (Order No. SEC 2018/NOTA/CR-10/Computerisation dated 06/11/2018)

The Order clearly states that all political parties in a workshop held on May 7th 2018 by the State Election Commission on the "Role of Political Parties towards a Healthier Democracy" expressed the opinion that **NOTA should be treated as a "Fictional Electoral Candidate" and re-election should be held whenever NOTA gets the highest votes.**

The BMC elections have the potential to give more quality to our daily lives than the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls: water supply, power, the BEST, roads, building permissions, primary health centres and hospitals, waste collection, markets, you name it, except for the Railways and Police which are central and state government subjects — the BMC rules. They have an annual budget of around Rs. 35,000/- Crores.

So with advance notice, political parties should start searching for good, non-criminal candidates amongst their leaders/workers for the BMC Elections 2022 to avoid the use of NOTA by Mumbaikars.

**MMJ**

## BMC Corporators performance dips in 2019-20 - Praja Foundation

### Congratulations to the top three Corporators

MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR	PARTY	GRADE	TOTAL SCORE %	RANK	ATTENDANCE		NO. OF QUESTIONS		QUALITY OF QUESTIONS		LAST CRIMINAL RECORD	
					Grade	Actual out of 22	Grade	Actual out of 14	Grade	Actual out of 45	Grade	Actual out of 25
	BJP	A	82.73	1	A	18.72	A	12.91	B	30.28	A	10
	BJP	A	80.03	2	A	17.90	A	12.01	C	26.76	A	10
	SS	B	79.91	3	A	20.51	A	13.55	B	20.94	F	2

The report card contains the performance of all the corporators besides the mayor. Out of the 227 elected representatives, the report card has ranked the performance of 220 corporators, excluding present Mayor Kishori Pednekar, Vishwanath Mahadeshwar, who was holding the post of Mayor until November 2019 and 5 others who had been suspended or who died in the 12 month evaluation period.

The corporators have been judged on their academic qualifications, attendance in the assembly and committee conferences, the number of questions they asked, the significance of and the high quality of questions, and their utilization of the space improvement fund and the felony file.

There are 13 committees and out of the 13 committees, the common physique assembly is the one which has all of the 227

corporators as members and is scheduled each month. The standing committee, which has 27 corporators as members and approves and allocates funds required for varied tasks, is held each week.

The report discovered that the questions raised by the corporators in the various committees weren't in step with the complaints raised by residents. A complete list of 2,270 questions had been asked by the corporators in all of the 13 committee conferences together with the common physique. Out of the 270 queries 63 were related to drainage points.

In all 326 questions raised by the corporators were associated with highway repairs, potholes, lacking hyperlinks, whereas the renaming of roads and railway stations was the second most vital situation raised by corporators. "90 per cent corporators (199) **contd. on Page 4**



## Take the Bull by the Horns How to Make the Governing System work for Citizens

**Shrikant Soman**

All over the world there is enormous dissatisfaction with the functioning of governments. We are in an environment wherein a mass agitational approach to express our dissatisfaction with the

'System' has become the norm. Now one more medium is getting increasingly used—social media. There is a plethora of extreme and derogatory posts and comments on this media. **Contd. on Page 3**

## SAVE AAREY – participation by citizens

**Anthony Dias**

An inner urge to protect Environment, prompted me in 2015, to join "Save Aarey" protestors, occasionally Aarey Conversation Group, would inform us Citizens, to participate in these protests for several years. AGNI volunteers,



Watchdog Foundation, The Bombay Catholic Sabha and Save Aarey **contd. on Page 2**

## SAVE AAREY – participation by citizens

Contd. from Page 1 groups, would assemble at Aarey and prominent locations with Save Aarey placards and conduct Awareness campaigns,

The issue gained Citizens and public interest from 2015, when Metro Project was announced, which also said that there will be a Metro Car Shed for the Mumbai Rail Corridor at Aarey-Goregaon. We Citizens along with students decided, that we have to save the green patch and bio-diversity spread over 1300 hectares of land at Aarey.

The swift move by the Government to fell 2700 Trees at night, prompted Citizen campaigners like me, to rush to the heavily guarded site. Many of the protestors, were detained at night and early morning, by the state police force on duty, who forced protestors in Police vans, who were taken into custody, for defying sec 144 which was imposed.

Aarey is also a home for over 3500 Adivasi and Warli Tribal groups. Many families were forcibly shifted to SRA houses. We were concerned that the rich bio-diversity, which had taken decades to grow into a Forest, was being felled mercilessly.



The Government in power, further claimed, that Aarey is not a notified Forest. Citizens,

NGO's and Students could not accept this lying down and the protests grew in numbers, which spread across Mumbai City. The Activists clearly stated that they are not against Metro Depot, but MMRCL's choice of Aarey land for the same, many alternatives were given to the Government, including Kanjurmarg and six other locations. Newspapers and Media were flooded with Objections by the citizens, then the Government decided to call a Public meeting hearing on 8th July 2019, The MMRDA Auditorium at Bandra East, was packed to full capacity by the protestors, which included

Students from Colleges across Mumbai, Save Aarey Citizen Teams, NGO's and more than 500 local Adivasi and Warli Tribals. It was announced at the meeting, that the Government,



had received 82,000 Objections, to prevent hacking of Trees.

All Activists and Citizens, Thanked Maharashtra Environment Minister Aditya Thackeray, when the notification was issued, which declared 600 acres of Aarey land as a reserved forest and also took up the issue of slum rehabilitation and the protection of Tribal rights. Aarey Metro Car shed will now be relocated at Kanjurmarg. Uddhav Thackeray Chief Minister, reiterated that the cases filed against Activists and NGO's who agitated and protested at Aarey Colony would be withdrawn. A big relief to students. Aditya Thackeray has been Congratulated for Saving Aarey, by All Activists, along with AGNI, for his role in protecting the green lung of Mumbai. A big Thank you for ensuring Development goes hand in hand with protection of Environment.

**Anthony Dias is AGNI's P/South ward Coordinator**

MMJ

## Anita Lobo from Bandra receives award



Anita Coreen Lobo vice president of Catholic Sabha, St. Andrews unit, received an award from H. E. Governor, Bhagat Singh Koshiyari for her services rendered during Covid-19. She is a member of AGNI JAAG H/West) and the first woman traffic warden of Bandra. **MMJ**

## City under siege

Jennifer Shetty

Mumbai is choking with the issue of vagrancy. This is the ugliest sight in our beautiful city. It's worse than the coronavirus pandemic because it's a perennial plague! Its time denizens of this city woke up to this threatening reality.

Local citizens and domestic and international tourists through South Mumbai, making it a flourishing tourist hub. Vagrants, on the other hand, are taking full advantage of this situation which is inherently beneficial for the city and are making the area a haven for themselves as authorities do very little to take action, stating different reasons most of which make no sense.

These vagrants give the city a very shabby look. They live on the streets, litter and do practically everything which is an eyesore for any passer-by. They use children to beg, women and men also beg much against the Begging Act of 1959.

Nefarious activities, like drug abuse, drug peddling, gambling, drinking and

prostitution is rampant. Most alarming is the smart phones they own to watch movies and to make calls. Where is the money coming from?

Residents with the help of AGNI in A ward have been proactive in liaising with the authorities, but the results have been abysmal so far.

Hence an alternative approach to deal with the problem emerged. We decided to create social awareness through videos and posters on a large scale. Our aim was to provide accommodation to the children in shelter homes and educate them with the aid of sponsors. We also wanted to give vocational training to the men and women.

All permissions were sought to launch the awareness campaign, but the pandemic stalled our plans. We now await the right time to launch the campaign again and get relief from a potentially explosive situation which can endanger the city.

**Jennifer Shetty is AGNI's Coordinator is A ward.**

MMJ

## An open letter to Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Mody

Contd. from Page 3 to understand from where this deficit of 25% will be met. Is any minister/MP/MLA ready for a salary cut of this percentage? If not, then why should the public be put through this wringer, especially senior citizens? Perhaps it is because unlike you, we do not have the power to fix our own salaries, allowances and perks and be paid for a full year, for attending legislative sessions for a total of 3 months and that too, many legislators attend sessions at their own sweet will.

When the matter of increasing your own salaries is raised in parliament the same is passed in just 2 minutes with no discussion, with no opposition at all from the ruling or opposition benches. For this increase, you totally overlook the cost to the exchequer, the fiscal deficit, economics or any

other factor.

The government started a scheme for deposits of senior citizens and the rate was 9.20% but In July 2014 it was reduced to 8.3% which was further reduced to 7.4% in May 2020. Further, the ceiling for deposits has been limited to Rs 15 lakhs only. This is totally unjustified. The rate should be a minimum of 12% and the deposit limit should be equal to what a person gets as terminal benefits. The government should ensure financial security to senior citizens so that they can walk with their heads straight up.

I am sure you will understand the plight of people whose lifestyle is bolstered by the interest from their life time savings.

Sorry if I have offended you in any way. Thanks and regards.

MMJ

## An open letter to hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Damodar Modi

 **J. M. Nagarjuna, Senior Executive Vice President, CoRWA (Confederation of Resident Welfare Associations in India)**

I am a senior citizen and on 01.08.2012, I put Rs 40 lakhs in a nationalized Bank for 5 years. I was being paid an amount of Rs. 35,352/= every month (of course subject to income tax) enabling me to lead a worry free life financially.

Now on maturity I have reinvested the amount in the same Bank and I will be paid Rs. 26,489, a shortfall of Rs.8863/= i.e. 25% over the previous return, per month.

Can you please advise me from where I should make good

the loss or should I sacrifice consumption of medicines, atta, dals, vegetables, fruit, milk or what?

Practically the government after taking over in 2014 has done nothing for senior citizens. No additional facilities have been extended but on the contrary, there has been a withdrawal of what existed in 2014. No commodity or provision item is available at the price of 2014. Yes, you have been able to bring down the figures of inflation and indices, but not the actual prices.

Ever so often the prices of some essential daily-use items go rocket high like dals, chana/besan, salt, onions and now tomatoes. At such times we cannot even dare see those items. .... I know you have political and theoretical replies for these issues like interest on

deposits and advances in banks depend on demand and supply.

The prices of daily use items vary with seasons as they are agricultural products. But the manner in which prices are shooting upwards cannot be justified by these reasons. If the government wants to provide cheaper credit to traders and industries, it should not be at the cost of depositors.

Banks are in a precarious position because they are sitting on piles of NPAs and all good money is being diverted for bad money. But is it not the duty of the government to enable the senior citizens to lead respectable lives? After all they have spent their golden years in serving various organizations and the nation. The government cannot look the other way.

I am at a loss **Contd. on Page 2**

## How to Make the Governing System work for Citizens

**Contd. from Page 1** 'Trolling' is being commonly used as a weapon against an opponent. The word 'trolling' did not even exist just a few years back! What is worse is that the opinion of the people seems to be getting polarised towards 'for' or 'anti' government, with political parties stoking these opinions.

There is also growing frustration among the common people with the whole governing system, resulting in a sizable number of people losing faith in the effectiveness of the system itself. This trend is very dangerous for democracy as it fosters extremism.

Is our governance as bad as the tsunami of negativity spewed by the social and electronic media make it out to be? If the answer is 'yes' and if the usual form of expression of people's dissatisfaction as mentioned above seems to be the only way to correct it, then we need to ask ourselves if the overall situation is hopeless.

And here comes the core of this discussion. The situation is certainly not as hopeless as it is projected to be. What then is the solution? An assertive citizen's movement for MAKING the governing system work for the benefit of its citizens while remaining WITHIN the system, in a non-agitational manner. Remain non-political with citizen centric emphasis. And most important of all, make full use of the existing laws which make governance transparent and functional.

Over the last 20 years there has been significant improvement in promulgating legal provisions for checks and balances on the government.

Unfortunately, there is a high level of illiteracy about these provisions not only amongst the poor, but also among the educated and affluent.

Consider the example of 'The Maharashtra Right to Public Service Act, 2015' which seeks to create a mechanism to ensure timely delivery of goods and services to citizens. This Act provides that the citizens shall be provided services by the state government in a transparent, efficient and time bound manner. In order to ensure effective implementation of this Act, the Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Service has been established.

It requires every public authority to publish a Citizens Charter. The idea behind this Act is that citizens should be treated as 'customers' of the governing system by ensuring that the public services are responsive to the citizens they serve. There are a set of commitments regarding the standards of service it delivers. I will deal with this and many other legal provisions which are meant for ensuring good governance in a series of articles to follow.

These will be published in subsequent issues of Mumbai Meri Jaan, where I will discuss these legal avenues with examples and how they can work in favour of citizens. What is important is improving our governance instead of ranting about the lacunas in the system. This is precisely what AGNI is striving to achieve.

**Shrikant Soman is AGNI's Coordinator in R (North), ex CEO of Bhatia Hospital, Tardeo**

**MMJ**

## An appeal for donations

**A**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-400031

Bank Details for donations transferred electronically:

**Account Name: AGNI, SBA/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.

Once you make a donation, to issue the 80G Certificate, kindly email us your Name, Amount and the Contact details to [agni.central@gmail.com](mailto:agni.central@gmail.com)

**MMJ**

**A VERY BIG THANK YOU  
for Donations received**

**in the month of October 2020:  
Mr. Subhadip Dutta Choudhary Rs.20,000/=**

# BMC Corporators performance dips in 2019-20 - Praja Foundation

contd from page 1 scored less than 50 per cent when complaints made by citizens were correlated to the questions raised by corporators in 2019-20," stated the report.

"The quality of questions raised by corporators has also been poor, only 12% of the total 2,270 questions in 2019-20 were raised on water, sanitation and solid waste management issues, while 7% were raised on health. This highlights the poor deliberative focus of corporators on issues that most affect citizens", stated Milind Mhaske, Director, Praja Foundation.

The report card noted that corporators' attendance was the lowest in this 12 month period in contrast to the time period (2017-2020). The rating for attendance has fallen to 72.6% in 2020 from 80.7% in 2018 and 77.6% in 2019. The report additionally discovered that three corporators haven't asked a single question in this period i.e. since 2017.

While the corporators have welcomed the report card, the

previous BMC has accused Praja of distorting information. "Praja is doing an excellent job in training as well as watching the performance of the corporators in the civic body. The report card is holding the political party and corporators accountable," stated Ravi Raja, Congress corporator and opposition leader in the BMC.

Praja Foundation is working in the sphere of accountability in governance. Since 2011, it has carried out coaching programmes for corporators — on how to ask questions relating to BMC's functioning, on how budgets are made and the way funds are allotted to corporators. Praja has introduced the elected representatives' report card since 2011 with reference to Mumbai and since then has printed 22 experiences in Mumbai and Delhi.

For detailed Report Card Link: [https://praja.org/praja\\_docs/praja\\_downloads/Mumbai%20Councilors%20Card\\_2020.pdf](https://praja.org/praja_docs/praja_downloads/Mumbai%20Councilors%20Card_2020.pdf)

MMJ

# Immunity tips during Covid 19

 **Komal Lala**

Emerging infectious diseases mould human history just as the ongoing coronavirus pandemic will, in all probability, leave its imprint on human life today. Every infection knocks on a different door of your cells and the ability to ward off this risk is by empowering our immune system. This can be achieved with the help of good nutrition and an improved lifestyle.

### KEY VITAMINS/ MINERALS

**Vitamins C, E, D Zinc and Iron**  
 Rich sources of Vitamin C: Gooseberries (Amla), Guavas, Strawberries, Raw Mango, Black currants, Parsley, Lemon Juice, Drumstick, Red, Yellow, Green Peppers.

**Zinc:** Seeds—Sunflower, Sesame, Nuts-Almonds, Cashews, Eggs, Shellfish

**Vitamin E:** Nuts— Almonds, Peanuts, Pistachios, Sunflower seeds, Spinach, Avocado

**Iron:** Raisins, Dates, Kidney beans, Bajra, Beetroot

### IMMUNITY BOOSTERS

Charge your morning with an invigorating green juice power packed with Vitamin C + Iron.



Spinach + Parsley+Amla+ Ginger + Cucumber+Mint  
 Make a decoction of Tulsi



Leaves + Ginger+Turmeric, to it add some Chamomile

leaves for a calming effect.

Spice up a Guava juice with Mint + pepper + Basil Leaves

Warm Turmeric milk with a

pinch of Pepper may induce good sleep. Curcumin, the



active Ingredient of turmeric, is a potent antioxidant.

20 minutes of Meditation, a relaxed mind, exercising, pursuing a hobby goes a long way for a stronger immune system.

Nourish your gut with the right nutrients and pave your own path towards good health!!

**Komal Lala is a nutritionist and volunteer in Bandra(W) JAAG**

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**

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