

# MUMBAI MERI JAAN

## THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF AGNI



### Editorial

## Obituary Jagdeep S. Chhokar: A voice for the Indian voter

Jagdeep S. Chhokar was a Professor (teacher, trainer, researcher, and advisor) in the Organizational Behaviour Area at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA), from 1985 till November 2006, when he retired after reaching the mandatory age of superannuation.



Prof. Chhokar was also a citizen-activist for improving democracy and governance in the country, a bird watcher and conservationist and a trained lawyer. He would attend law classes in the evening, with no intention of practicing but to have a better ability to engage with lawyers. He worked as a mechanical engineer with the Indian Railways.

Being a founder member of Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), he worked on electoral and political reforms for over 20 years. In fact, His life and work have been at the very heart of electoral reforms in India. His lifelong commitment was rooted in one simple but profound principle — the rights of the voter, the electors are the cornerstone of democracy. For decades, his tireless efforts not only strengthened the voice of the Indian voter but also gave shape and direction to some of the most significant electoral reforms our country has witnessed.

Prof. Chhokar dedicated the latter half of his life to an unyielding pursuit of clean politics, earning him the moniker of a 'crusader' for his cause. His passing is a loss not just for the legal and activist communities but for the very fabric of Indian democracy he worked so tirelessly to mend.

Truly selfless champion of democracy and public causes. Humble and self-effacing to the core, he and the ADR were behind some of the major electoral reforms in the last two decades, including disclosure of property and criminal antecedents of candidates. ADR is the principal petitioner against the SIR.

Pray God to give enough strength to his wife and family to bear this irreparable loss, and MAY HIS SOUL REST IN ETERNAL PEACE!

### ADR team responds

"The overwhelming outpourings of love and respect for Prof Chhokar have touched our hearts and only solidified our aim to strengthen his legacy by working harder for a stronger and more vibrant democracy. He was one of our founding fathers, and his teachings and principles will continue to be the core of our work.

His loss is irreparable for his loved ones and ADR, and during this period of grief, your words of encouragement, love, and support provide solace and strength to all of us."

MMJ

## NHRC Issues Notice To BMC For Human Rights Violations Over Unsafe Manual Scavenging In M East Ward

[Manoj Ramakrishnan](#)

The National Human Rights Commission has issued notices to the commissioner, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, district collector, commissioner of police, and the assistant municipal commissioner, M East ward, saying that the BMC is violating human rights by permitting manual scavengers to clean sewage drains with bare hands, risking their health and lives. The agencies have been asked to prepare a list of victims of manual scavenging in the ward and reply to the notice by October 24.

### Complaint from Citizens' Forum



The notice was issued earlier this week in response to a complaint in April 2023 by the Govandi Citizens' Welfare Forum, seeking the commission's intervention in stopping blatant violations of laws forbidding manual scavenging, including the Prohibition of

## Mumbai's First Dedicated Local Train Compartment For Senior Citizens

[Kamal Mishra](#)



Central Railway has introduced the first local train rake equipped with a dedicated and specially renovated compartment for senior citizens recently. Meanwhile, Western Railway is in the process of launching a similar facility, with plans already underway.

"Central Railway's Matunga Workshop has successfully rolled out the first Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) rake (local train) featuring a dedicated compartment for

senior citizens in the Mumbai suburban network. The initiative, taken in immediate response to Railway Board directives, involved converting a middle luggage compartment in the sixth coach from the Mumbai end into an exclusive space for elderly passengers. This move marks a significant step toward inclusive mobility and aims to reduce the challenges senior citizens face while boarding and deboarding trains, particularly during peak hours" said an



## Mumbai BJP Chief Ameet Satam asks BMC to stay interim open spaces policy and explore regulated advertising

Considering Mumbai's rapidly shrinking open spaces, BJP city president and Andheri (West) MLA Ameet Satam has demanded that the BMC stay its interim policy and not allot any open spaces to private parties. Satam has urged the civic body to explore regulated advertising in these spaces as a means to generate revenue to maintain these open spaces. He urged the civic body to refrain from allotting any new open spaces under the current 11-month interim policy until a new citizen-friendly policy is framed.

Highlighting the absence of a comprehensive open spaces policy, Satam said the BMC currently has an interim policy that allows open spaces to be handed over for maintenance to private parties, trusts, and institutions for an 11-month contractual period. "There is a lot of concern in the city regarding open spaces, the potential of them being usurped by vested interests. Some open spaces are permanently converted into clubs/ gymkhana for raking in profits," Satam said in his letter to BMC Commissioner and administrator Bhushan Gagrani.

**MLA's Letter to Commissioner**  
Satam further said that the



BMC's attempts at framing an open spaces policy have faced stiff opposition due to its failure of not keeping in mind the public sentiment. "The city is of the view that all open spaces in the city should be compulsorily be maintained only by BMC and not handed over to any private party, trust, organization or institution and BMC can have regulated advertising in these open spaces to generate revenue."

"Once a trust or private party occupies space, it becomes extremely difficult to evict them and it becomes a strong base for them to continue occupation. It has been observed that some trusts are making applications under 11 month interim policy with vested interests to occupy before policy is finalised. BMC must ensure that no open space in the city is given under the 11 month interim policy and BMC should maintain all open spaces," Satam added. **MMJ**

## Mumbai To Launch Electric Water Taxi Service On September 22, Cutting Travel Time And Offering Cleaner Commute

**Sweetly Bhagat**

Mumbai's long-pending electric water taxi service is finally set to debut on September 22, offering a faster, cleaner, and more comfortable commute between Gateway of India/ Mumbai Ferry Wharf and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority

(JNPA).

### Electric Boats Cut Travel Time to 40 Minutes

Currently, wooden boats ply this route, charging Rs100 per passenger and taking over an hour to cover the distance. In contrast, **Contd. on Page 3**

## Kala Ghoda's Phase 2 revamp to uplift 5 roads

As the 1st phase of Kala Ghoda precinct development is nearing

done with trees such as Bakul Tree, Variegated Pandanus, Heliconia Psittacorum, Purple



completion, BMC has approved phase 2 of development which will uplift five roads along with a plaza and parking space for citizens. The initiative is expected to transform Kala Ghoda into a more pedestrian friendly space.

### Roads Included in Phase 2

Five roads which will undergo revamp in Phase 2 are Mahatma Gandhi Road, K. Dubash Road, Nagindas Road, Chamber of Commerce Lane and Forbes Street. Work is ongoing at V B Gandhi Marg, Rutherford Street, Rope Walk Lane, Saibaba Road and B Bharucha Road as part of Phase 1.

One key aspect of phase 2 is walking plaza with more parking space at Kala Ghoda. As part of the plan, road outside Rhythm house (portion of K. Dubash Road) will be converted into a plaza. Road outside Jehangir Art Gallery will be a two way street.

One key aspect of phase 2 is walking plaza with more parking space at Kala Ghoda. As part of the plan, road outside Rhythm house (portion of K. Dubash Road) will be converted into a plaza. Road outside Jehangir Art Gallery will be a two-way street.

A combination of materials —Basalt Natural Finish Stone, Basalt Leather Finish Stone, Maroon Granite Stone and Yellow Granite Stone— will be used for flooring and design of the plaza. Adding to this, landscaping of the plaza will be

Heart and Golden Durante.

"Given the extensive work required in phase 2 of the project it can be further divided in phase 2A and 2B. Initiatives like extending the existing parking facility at Kala Ghoda into underground parking will be part of phase 2B. We are excited to see this plan taking shape. Under the vision of Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and local MLA Rahul Narwekar this initiative is set to transform Kala Ghoda into a greener, and more pedestrian-friendly space. Kala Ghoda will attract local as well as international tourists," said former BJP local corporator Makrand Narwekar.

According to the plan, the lanes will get new pavements lights and greener vicinity. Kala Ghoda is strategically located near Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalay, Jehangir Art Gallery, National gallery of Modern Art, Institute of Contemporary Art and Eliyahu Synagogue making it the art and cultural precinct of Mumbai. The concept of vehicle-free zone is also being implemented at Kala Ghoda.

### BMC Approvals and Implementation

Narwekar, who has been following up with the BMC to complete this project added that the plans by Urban Design Architecture (UDA) have got BMC approvals. Phase 2A is estimated at Rs 12 crores. Once approvals are received from all agencies, tender process will begin. **MMJ**

**Each on forward this to all Mumbaikars on your email and whatsapp list**

## Chandivali Citizens' Association to mark BMC's unkept road promise with 'Jhoot Bolo' cake cutting ceremony S Balakrishnan

The Chandivali Citizens' Welfare Association held a unique "Jhoot Bolo" cake cutting ceremony to mark the second anniversary of the BMC's unkept promise on Sunday, September 14, at 6:00 p.m at Synchronicity Club House, Nahar Amrit Shakti Road, Chandivali.

### Two-Year wait after BMC's pledge

Two years ago, following a hunger protest by the CCWA demanding the completion of a 90 ft connecting Chandivali Farm Road to the Jogeshwari-Vikhroli Link Road (JVLR) the BMC had issued a press release pledging to do the task but has not completed the work.

### Citizens Protest in a Unique Way

Mandeep Singh Makkar, founder of the

association said the citizens had no choice but protest in a unique way. "We hope that at least now the BMC will wake up and fulfil its promise. The project was conceived 32 years ago," he added.

### CCWA's Role in Community Welfare

The CCWA is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for the rights and welfare of the residents of Chandivali. The association works on issues related to civic infrastructure, sanitation, and community development.



MMJ

## BMC renews 5-yr pact to aid teacher training

The BMC renewed its partnership with Pehlay Akshar Foundation (PAF) by signing a five-year extension to scale its flagship teacher training programme. Over the last five years, the initiative has trained 8,000 teachers across 814 municipal schools, directly impacting over 2.5 lakh students.

The collaborative initiative was launched in 2019 to address critical gaps in teacher preparedness and classroom engagement. The programme is said to blend structured training workshops, peer-to-peer learning, live classroom demonstrations, and one-on-one mentoring with continuous support through digital resources such as energisers, worksheets, lesson plans, and more, delivered via the Pehlay Akshar App and WhatsApp bot.

BMC commissioner Bhushan Gagrani, said, "If we nurture social skills through functional English in the formative years, then it becomes the first step, English for knowledge the second, and together they open the window to the world, and to learning. Pehlay



Akshar is that beginning, and by passing on these skills to students, we take the right step forward."

PAF claimed that assessments by independent agencies like Sattva and CSRBx show that four in five teachers were able to recall and apply core training concepts, and 85% of teachers actively use the programme's digital app 2-3 times a week. According to the findings, teachers report a noticeable rise in student confidence, participation, and collaboration across different learning levels, with 86% observing greater teamwork among students.

Founder of PAF, Radha Goenka, said, "This partnership is proof that systemic change is possible when public institutions and social innovators work together. The next five years are about creating a replicable model of teacher empowerment that can inspire public education across India."

MMJ

## Maharashtra Govt to launch upgraded Aaple Sarkar 2.0 Portal Kalpesh Mhamunkar

In a major step towards delivering government services and welfare schemes to citizens in a faster and easier manner, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced that the state government will operationalize the upgraded Aaple Sarkar 2.0 portal by October 2, 2025.

Speaking at a meeting on Governance Process Re-engineering held at Sahyadri Guest House in Mumbai, CM Fadnavis said the government is committed to using technology to ensure citizens can access all services seamlessly. He directed that all departmental portals and mobile applications should be integrated into the Aaple Sarkar platform to create a single-window system.

The meeting was attended by IT Minister Adv. Ashish Shelar, Chief Secretary Rajesh Kumar, and State Service Guarantee Commission Chief Commissioner Manukumkar Srivastava.

Highlighting the government's aim to improve citizens' ease of living, Fadnavis said changes will be implemented in three phases—on Constitution Day (November 26, 2025), Republic Day (January 26, 2026), and Maharashtra Day (May 1, 2026).

The CM also directed that the Service Guarantee Act be expanded to cover not only timely government services but also delivery of benefits under welfare schemes, based on eligibility. Applicants will be able to track their applications online at every stage and receive updates digitally. Once benefits or services are delivered, citizens will also be able to give feedback and register grievances online.

To speed up approvals and reduce paperwork, Fadnavis instructed officials to minimize the number of documents and

form fields required. He emphasized that all welfare benefits must be provided only through the MahaDBT portal, with no offline process involved. Citizens should not have to visit government offices, he stressed.

The CM further said that government services through WhatsApp are being developed and will also be integrated with the portal. "The state government's objective is clear—every citizen should get the benefits of government schemes and services in the simplest, fastest, and most transparent manner. All departments must work with dedication to implement this citizen-friendly system," Fadnavis stated.

MMJ

### Electric Water Taxi



Contd from Page 2 the new electric boats will cut travel time to under 40 minutes.

Confirming the launch, Sohel Kazani, owner of Bharat Freight Group (BFG), which will manage the operations, said two boats will be introduced in the first phase. "One is a hybrid vessel powered by solar, electric battery, and diesel backup, while the other is fully electric. Both can be charged in less than an hour," Kazani explained. In the second phase, four hydrogen powered boats will join the fleet once generators are in place.

Made of fibre and glass with a European design, the boats promise not only energy efficiency but also greater stability and comfort. BFG also plans to expand the service beyond JNPA with additional routes connecting South Mumbai to Elephanta Caves, Belapur, Alibaug, and harbor tourism circuits.

MMJ

Each one forward this to all Mumbaikars on your email and whatsapp list



Unsafe Manual Scavenging

Cintd from Page 1 Employment of Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.

Advocate Faiyaz Alam Shaikh, convenor of the citizens' group, said they provided the commission photographs as proof that labourers were working in unsafe conditions in Kamala Rajan Nagar and Baiganwadi in M East.

Dinesh Berdia of Sangharsh, a group working for the abolition of manual scavenging and the caste-based exploitation involved in the work, said, "Govandi residents brought it to the notice of the human rights commission, but it is happening all over Mumbai. Contractors entrust the work to subcontractors who hired unorganised labourers. They do not care about the lives or health of the workers and their families," said Berdia.

BMC's Tender Process and Reality on Ground

The commission said that the BMC appoints contractors by inviting tender for desilting of minor drains, road side drains and culverts by using manpower and machinery. The contractor removes silt and floating material from minor nallahs and road-side drains by deploying labourers

and machinery as these are storm water outlets meant to carry rainwater discharge.

However, human rights activists pointed out that in Mumbai, storm water drains have become sewage lines, with illegal discharge of domestic and industrial waste.

NHRC Rejects BMC Safety Claims

In an earlier reply, the BMC had told the commission that desilting is done by manpower with safety gears, such as hand gloves, helmets, reflecting jackets, safety shoes, with contractors penalised for lapses. In case the drains are difficult for cleaning equipment to access, contractors use labourers, but under precautions and safety advice of a medical officer.

The commission debunked the claims, saying that labourers were found cleaning gutters with bare hands and the concerned authorities failed to explain this in their report dated August 25, 2023. The commission further stated

Mumbai's first dedicated local train compartment for senior citizens

Page 1 official of CR.

According to Central Railway, the redesigned compartment includes enhanced seating arrangements featuring three 3-seater benches and two 2-seater

units, offering > > total seating capacity of 1 3 passengers. To optimize comfort and accessibility, stainless steel tubular partitions with sight-level panels and integrated grab poles have been installed.

Safety enhancements include knurled vertical grab poles at doorway footboards and emergency ladders fitted under both doorframes. In addition, aesthetic improvements such as vinyl wrapping have been used to enhance the visual appeal and ambience of the compartment.

"With the rollout of this first prototype, Central Railway has set a benchmark for future infrastructure upgrades aimed at senior citizen comfort. The initiative marks the beginning of a broader plan to convert all EMU rakes (local trains) in the Central Railway fleet to include similar dedicated compartments gradually."

On Western Railway, the process of introducing senior citizen compartments is progressing. A senior Western Railway official confirmed that a contract has already been awarded to convert one luggage compartment of all non-air-conditioned rakes into dedicated compartments for the elderly. The conversion work is ongoing, and the first rake with this special compartment is expected to be introduced into service soon.

Currently, Western Railway provides 14 seats per train for senior citizens, generally located in the third and twelfth coaches from the Churchgate end. However, due to excessive crowding during rush hours, these seats are often difficult to access, forcing many elderly commuters to travel under unsafe conditions.

"To address this, Western Railway has decided to convert one luggage compartment in each of its 105 non-AC local train rakes—including 90 twelve-coach and 15 fifteen-coach trains—into a dedicated senior citizen compartment. These newly designed compartments will feature seating capacity for 13 passengers and standing space for 91, significantly improving comfort, accessibility, and safety for older commuters," said an official of Western Railway.

that even if it was the contractors who employed labourers for cleaning the gutters, it does not absolve the principal employer - the BMC - of their liability for safeguarding the manual scavengers.

Pending Response could Lead to Coercive Action

The commission said that there appears to be a violation of the 2013 law. The commission said the M East ward has not replied to its show cause notice in May 2024, as to why a compensation of Rs 50,000 each should not be given to manual scavengers for violation of their human rights. The commission said that failure to reply to the notice will lead to coercive process under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

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

WARD NAME	AREAS	COORDINATOR(S)	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	theoimsouza@gmail.com
F/North	Sion, Wadala, Matunga, Dadar(E), Antop Hill	Nikhil Desai	9819930405	n.c.desai2012@gmail.com
G/North	Mahim, Dadar(W), Matunga(W), Dharavi	Bulu Saldanha	9920323831	bulu_saldanha@yahoo.com
H/East	Bandra(E), Khar (E), Santa Cruz (E), Kalina	Reuben Dias	9930569225	reuben6947@yahoo.co.in
H/West	Bandra(W), Khar(W), Santa Cruz(W)	Cherian Joseph Sanjeev D'souza Madhupopai	9892314442 9824028940 9820048996	cheriankjoseph@yahoo.com sanjeevd270@gmail.com madhupopai@hotmail.com
K/East	Vile Parle (E), Andheri (E), Jogeshwari (E)	James John	9324086140	k-jamesjohn@hotmail.com
K/West	Vile Parle (W), Andheri (W), Jogeshwari (W)	Sandra Alex	9820602521	sandraalex2357@gmail.com
L	Kurla, Nehru Nagar, Chandivli	Nutan Bhalla	9819171015	nutsie59@gmail.com
N	Ghatkopar, Vikhroli	Kishor K. Chudasama	9821051346	kishorkc_shantu@gmail.com
P/South	Goregaon (West)	Anthony Dias	9821291660	diasapvoice@gmail.com
R/South	Kandivli (East & West), Charkop	S. K. Nangia	9322258038	sknangia2004@yahoo.com
R/North	Borivli, Dahisar (East West), IC Colony	Willie Shirsat Shrikant Soman Glenda Almeida	9820213392 9324228946 9820291563	shirsatwillie382@hotmail.com shrikant_soman@gmail.com glenda301@gmail.com
M/West	Chembur	Krantikumar Sherkhane	703900255	krantikumar@gmail.com
S	Bhandup, Kanjurmargin, Powai	Pamela Cheema	98201 50748	pamelacheema@gmail.com
T	Mulund	Laxmidas Thakkar	8080011966	l.thakkar@yahoo.co.in

Board of Trustees

Convenor  
Dinesh Ahir  
Trustees  
Rajkumar Sharma  
Sharad Kumar  
Shrikant Soman  
Zahida Banatwala

Editorial Board

Sharad Kumar [Editor]  
Pamela Cheema [Asstt. Editor]  
Mario Fishery  
Shrikant Soman

Email: mmj.agni@gmail.com  
https://sites.google.com/site/agnimumbaimerijaan/

Published by  
AGNI  
Chadha Bldg. 1st Flr, Plot No. 95,  
Wadala (W), Mumbai - 400031  
agni.mumbai99@gmail.com  
Ph: 2416 5956  
www.agnimumbai.in

Each one forward this to all Mumbaikars on your email and whatsApp list