

# 6Park NewsDesk

## Water supply: What did the BMC election manifests promise in 2017?

At Citizen Matters, we review the promises made in the respective election manifestos by the four major electoral parties, namely the Shiv Sena (SS), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Congress Party. Nationalist. (NCP) ahead of the BMC elections in February 2022.

We review if these promises made by them have been kept and what is Mumbai current position on these issues. To begin the series, we take a look at the promises made on the topic of providing a clean and safe water supply.

### Water requirement in Mumbai

Mumbai currently provides 188 liters per capita per day (lpcd) of water, which is higher than the 135 lpcd prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), and yet the city continues to have a shortage of potable water.

The city gets its water from seven seized water resources in neighboring districts, including Thane, Palghar and Nashik. To meet its growing need, the city is now in the process of building more dams – Gargai and Pinjal – nearly 195 kilometers from the city, in addition to the existing central government Damanganga dam project.

Activists have been pointing out how Mumbai is failing to access its own groundwater reserves for non-potable water uses. The city was considering recycling treated wastewater for non-potable uses to reduce the burden of water shortages.

It has been able to provide only 3.85 billion liters per day of water versus the required need of 4505 MLD of water. About 30% of the city's water continues to be wasted through leaks and theft.

### Who promised what in the previous elections?

In 2017, all political parties promised 24/7 water supply for all citizens in their electoral manifestos, a promise that does not appear to have been kept. Congress and the NCP promised free water supply for all, although the NCP specified a limit of 700 liters of water per day.

The BJP promised to cancel the 8% annual increases in water rates and freeze rates for five years. They also promised not to charge for water up to 750 liters of water per day.

All parties also agreed to install wastewater treatment plants to obtain water for non-potable domestic uses. In fact, the PNC suggested that the use of potable water for domestic uses would be prohibited.

The Shiv Sena, BJP, NCP had also promised property tax concessions for housing societies that observe rainwater harvesting; a measure that is intended to help with the city's water shortage. NCP had promised the benefits of the Floor Space Index rather than adopting rainwater harvesting measures. The Shiv Sena had promised to reactivate the old wells to increase the water for non-potable uses, the NCP added that the underground tanks would also be cleaned to use the water for domestic use. The BJP promised to work to stop the thefts and water leaks. He also promised a detailed study on thefts and water leaks to completely stop the unaccounted for water supply. Congress promised to free Mumbai tankers and install water meters for everyone. It promised a water connection for everyone for just Rs 1500. The BJP promised Right To Water and to provide tanker water for areas where tap water could not be supplied.

Water is a critical issue and All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) promised 10 liters of mineral water for slum dwellers by installing slum water treatment plants.

## What is the current status of these promises?

Currently, the water supply is available for only a few hours every day, in many parts of the city. There is a large disparity between the distribution of water to slums and non-slums, according to the Praja Foundation report on the state of civic issues in Mumbai-2021. They found that the average water supply time in the city in 2018 was only 5.4 hours and non-slum areas received more water (150 psi) compared to slum areas (45 psi).

Most residential complexes maintain their own storage tanks, which are filled and distributed to residents through internal systems. "Political parties cleverly cite this as 24x7 water supply because BMC's water network is still old and inept so that it is charged all the time to handle the high pressure water supply at all hours," says Sitaram Shelar, coordinator of Pani Haq Samiti. Getting a water connection is still complicated, not very transparent and random.

The Gargai and Pinjal dams that were to provide 1305 MLD (440 MLD from the Gargai river dam and 865 MLD from the Pinjal dam), to carry the surplus water reserves and bring days of water supply 24 hours a day, the 7 days a week, they remain stagnant since five promises were made. years ago. Work on these dams has not started and several authorizations have yet to be received. According to the BMC Environmental Status Report (ESR) – 2020-21, while work on the Gargai Dam can start in 2022 and be completed by 2026, the Pinjal Dam project can start in 2024 and be completed only by 2028. The Damanganga-Pinjal Dam The river link project (1586 MLD) also continues to go through various stages of conception.

Although BMC is supposed to introduce 100% water metering, as part of the adoption of the Atal Mission for Urban Rejuvenation and Transformation (AMRUT), the island city continues to pay a lump sum "cost of service" as part property tax. those who are not slums in the suburbs pay water rates. In the midst of the pandemic, the BMC tried to file charges, which was opposed by all political parties. Only a few societies monitor rainwater harvesting (RWH) measures. Through an RTI report, Praja found that only 3209 units in Mumbai had adopted RWH as of October 2020. According to Ramesh Prabhu, president of the Maharashtra Society Welfare Association, there are an estimated 35,000 CHS in the city of Mumbai , of which around 10,000 are estimated to have arisen after 2002, when the RWH became mandatory for new buildings.

Rather than reactivate the 18,911 wells identified in the city that could provide 378 MLD of water according to the ESR, RTI activists found that 84 wells in Kurla alone had disappeared into the ground, a euphemism for filling wells and building on top of them.

"After a year of low rainfall in 2009, the BMC found, renovated and used water from 12,531 wells in the city in just one month. With proper maintenance, Mumbai wells can continue to hydrate the city. Necessary policy changes can make everyday water insecurity and vulnerability, particularly for informal Mumbai residents, a thing of the past. "Nikhil Anand, Author of Hydraulic City and Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, He says.

Wastewater treatment plants are far from providing water for domestic reuse. Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Chahal in his 20-21 budget speech noted that so far only 10 MLD of such tertiary-treated wastewater was available at the New Colaba wastewater treatment plant, which set out to supply 3 MLD to nearby offices of the Indian Navy for potable use as per your demand. The project has failed to advance beyond this.

The BMC launched a desalination project, which could pay off in a few years.

"The new desalination plants consume a lot of energy, raise the temperature of the sea and pollute the water, causing damage to marine biodiversity," Anand observes.

Leaks continue to be a problem even today as much as it was five years ago. In fact, Praja's white paper notes that

## What do activists say about it?

Sitaram Shelar, who has helped inject water issues into electoral manifestos for certain parties, claims that most political parties do not take them seriously. "For most political parties, manifestos are simply documents intended to be presented to educated electorates. It is not legally valid and therefore neither party takes it seriously. Right before elections, parties often summon activists like us to ask for opinions to be added to manifestos, and these promises are forgotten once elections are won. Citizens themselves hardly bother to follow up or even know the promises made during the elections. Citizens continue to see themselves as subjects and do not demand responsibility from their leaders and are happy with the donations from the State".

Link: <https://6park.news/pennsylvania/water-supply-what-did-the-bmc-election-manifests-promise-in-2017.html>