

In 4 years, BMC received 46,235 road related complaints; 17,908 for potholes: Praja report

54,029 complaints on SWM; parties fail on manifesto promises

Between F.Y. 2017-18 and 2020-21, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) received 17,908 complaints related to potholes. 54,029 SWM complaints were registered of which 40% were for garbage not collected. 34,129 complaints were related to hawkers/nuisance due to vagrants on municipal roads, footpaths, gardens. 14% (1222) questions raised by corporators were on naming and renaming of roads, chowks, buildings etc. 39 percent of overall deliberations were related to the manifesto points of major political parties.

With MCGM elections scheduled to be held in February 2022, political parties and their candidates will soon declare their commitments for the coming tenure. Praja Foundations' report "Mumbai's Party-Wise Manifesto (2017-22) Analysis & Targets to Set for 2022-2027", released last week, analyses manifesto promises of major political parties (Shiv Sena, BJP, INC and NCP) in the last MCGM elections for the current term and compares them with deliberations, specific manifesto points and citizens' complaints related to those manifesto points.

All parties promised to improve the condition of roads in Mumbai. Shiv Sena had promised pothole-free Mumbai with new technology and material. However, in F.Y. 2017-18 to 2020-21, 17,908 complaints were related to potholes. Shiv Sena councillors in their deliberations raised a higher number of civic issues like healthcare, roads, municipal staff, education and SWM. They also raised a higher number of issues on BEST transport services, potholes, fire services and social culture in the city.

BJP in its manifesto mentioned a pothole-free Mumbai Policy. BJP councillors have raised maximum issues on roads, gardens and open spaces, SWM, healthcare and water supply. Additionally, they raised a greater number of issues on vulnerable sections and development plans while very few issues were raised on services related to disaster management and fire services.

INC and NCP promised to address all potholes complaints in 24 hours. INC councillors had a higher number of deliberations for civic issues like healthcare, roads, municipal staff, water supply and SWM. NCP councillors raised maximum issues on healthcare, education, roads, municipal staff.

From 2017-18 to 2020-21 a total of 46,235 road-related complaints were registered of which 39% were for bad patches and/or potholes on the roads. In 2020 it took an average of 52 days to resolve a road-related complaint. In four years from 2017-18 to 2020-21, only 69 questions were asked in total for issues related to potholes of which 36% were raised by BJP, 41% by Shiv Sena, 22% by INC and 1% by NCP. 14% (1222) questions were raised on naming and renaming of roads, chowks, buildings etc from 2018-2018 to 2020-21.

Though BJP mentioned in its manifesto solutions to ensure 24-hours water supply in Mumbai, however the average timing of water supply in 2020 was only 5.39 hours. Furthermore, out of the 290 zones, 204 zones (70%) receive only up to 4 hours of water supply since 2017. Despite

this, councillors have asked 245 questions in four years on water supply.

NCP and INC promised in their manifestoes no more water leakages and 100% metering respectively. However, as of December 2020, 17,552 (4%) units in Mumbai are non-metered connections and in 2020, 15,463 complaints were related to water leakages. From 2017-18 to 2020-21, on average, INC councillors asked 12 questions on water supply each year, while NCP councillors asked only 1 question each year.

All parties promised improvement in SWM at the ward level and better collection of garbage however, 54,029 SWM complaints were registered of which 40% were for garbage not collected. 10,549 complaints on solid waste management were received in 2017-2018, 14,892 in 2018-2019, 17,887 in 2019-2020 and 10,701 complaints were received in 2020-2021.

BJP promised provision of all facilities to hawkers and peddlers, INC promised Hawkers Licence, and NCP promised to create Hawkers Zones. The Hawkers Policy is yet to be implemented in Mumbai. 34,129 complaints related to hawkers/ nuisance due to vagrants on municipal roads, footpaths, gardens in 2017-18 to 2020-21. To address this a total of 128 questions were asked by all councillors from 2017-18 to 2020-21, an average of 32 questions each year. 61% were asked by BJP councillors, 20% by Shiv Sena councillors, 17% by INC and 2% were asked by NCP councillors.

An average number of councillors in the past four years have been taken into consideration for calculations. Shiv Sena has 92 councillors, BJP -83 councillors, INC -30 councillors, NCP-9 councillors. The current numbers of councillors for the parties are Shiv Sena: 97; BJP: 81; INC: 29; NCP: 8.

Praja recommends the implementation of hawker's policy with more effective and targeted deliberations.

“The disparity of complaints and questions asked by councillors go on to reaffirm the importance of deliberation of citizen-specific issues. It is also important to look at the SDG goals and other global and national targets for various issues and work towards achieving them. These are important targets to achieve as these directly correspond to the quality of life of citizens and MCGM needs to focus on the same. Political parties along with the administration must identify, understand and implement achievable targets in their manifesto with reference to global and national targets,” said Nitai Mehta, founder trustee, Praja Foundation.

“The report also highlights the need for councillors to refer to the promises made in the manifesto before the elections while deliberating during their term. Despite promises being made to solve issues related to potholes, water supply, hawkers and so on, deliberations on them have not been adequate,” added Milind Mhaske, director, Praja Foundation.

“39% of overall deliberations was related to the manifesto points of major political parties from 2017-18 to 2020-21. Despite promises to resolve citizens' issues, deliberations on them were not satisfactory leading to greater complaints,” says the Praja report.

On an average from 2017-18 to 2020-21, one Shiv Sena councillor has asked only 14 questions on the issues related to the manifesto promises.

In four years only one question was asked by these councillors on most issues. From 2017-18 to 2020-21, a BJP councillor has on average asked only 18 questions on the issues related to the manifesto promises.

From 2017-18 to 2020-21 an INC councillor has asked only 19 questions on average on issues related to the manifesto promises. And on average 21 questions were asked by one NCP councillor from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

Further, in the case of health, cause of death data has been unavailable since January 2020. There are 44% vacant posts in medical staff (directly treating patients), 45% and 20% vacant posts are in para-medical and nursing staff respectively as of 2020. Out of the 187 public dispensaries, 170 dispensaries are open for only 7 hours up to 4 pm.

Praja recommends that all health data should be maintained and analysed on a real-time basis. It says that NBC and UDPFI recommend one dispensary for every 15,000 population and 'SDG 3' (good health and wellbeing) targets should be incorporated in all policy planning.

In the case of education, in 74% of schools in 2018-19, councillors did not attend even one SMC meeting. 1,74,464 school children were screened under the School Health Scheme in 2019-20 and these children suffered from 1,97,889 total health defects. However, for 2020-21, RTI reply received by the MCGM department for the scheme, mentions "zero" children were screened during the pandemic

Praja recommends that SDG 4 for quality education targets to ensure free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes should be achieved. Focus should be on strengthening the SMC and encouraging participation and regular health check-ups with 100% coverage of all school students should be carried out.

Regarding water and sewerage, average maximum BOD recorded in all the major beach outlets was 19mg/lit. in 2019. (CPCB norm is <3mg/lit.) The maximum BOD of the Mithi river was 50mg/lit as compared to the norm of <3mg/lit.

Praja recommends that BIS standard of 135lpcd must be supplied. MCGM's goal of 100% metering and MCGM 24/7 water supply project must be implemented. SDG 6 for clean water and sanitation to provide universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all must be adhered to and 100% of Sewerage generated should be treated. Treated water can be reused for various purposes.

As per Praja findings, there is currently one community toilet seat per 42 males and 34 females. Only 1 in 4 public toilets were for women in 2020. Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) guidelines for all public and community toilets should be implemented. There should be 100% water and sewerage connection in all public and community toilets.

Deonar dumping ground has been functional way beyond the prescribed active landfill lifespan of 10 to 25 years. The SBM guidelines for SWM must be incorporated. All waste generated must be recovered at ward level so waste sent to dumping grounds can be reduced and eventually eradicated.

Recommendations and Targets set for 2022-2027

1. (a) For empowered city government, Praja recommends an empowered Mayor where the office of the Mayor should be co-terminus with the term of the city government to synchronize planning, execute projects envisioned and ultimately fulfil citizens' mandate by the office of the mayor.

(b) Having a single Authority. 74th CAA has recommended the state governments to devolve 18 functions listed in the Twelfth Schedule to the city governments where all agencies should also be under the direct control of the Mayor.

(c) Having trained human resources where local governments must hold extensive capacity

building and training workshops for the administration and elected representatives and holding employees accountable for their actions

2. Fiscal Empowerment (a) with devolution of financial power where city government should hold independent authority to introduce and revise taxes/charges and provision to include budget allocated by parastatal agencies in the city.

(b) Systemic fiscal transfers where state finance commission (SFC) reports and action was taken on them should be available on the official website of the state government.

(c) The State Municipal Act should make it mandatory to publish the budget and accounts on the city government's website. The state municipal act should have provisions for conducting an external audit

3. (a) Strengthen citizen participation regularly monitored by all stakeholders to ensure a citizen-centric approach.

(b) Have open government data, user friendly and easily accessible with single data touchpoint, up-to-date data transactions.

(c) Have a public grievance redressal management with a single centralised database under one platform with the provision of outcome indicators and feedback mechanisms.

Link: <https://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/in-4-years-bmc-received-46235-road-related-complaints-17908-for-potholes-praja-report-->