

13,138 complaints escalated to BMC chief remain unresolved

By Sabah Virani

May 18, 2023 12:44 AM IST

Over 13,000 complaints escalated to the level of the municipal commissioner in Mumbai went unresolved in 2022, according to data from the Praja Foundation's report on Civic Issues. Of the 104,068 complaints filed, only 414 were resolved, with most complaints taking an average of 37 to 93 days to resolve. The escalation matrix was developed to address the issue of complaints remaining stuck at lower levels of the civic administration, but accountability cannot be enforced.

Mumbai: A staggering 13,138 citizens' complaints escalated to the level of the municipal commissioner went unresolved in 2022, data from the Praja Foundation's report on the Status of Civic Issues has revealed.

A total of 1,04,068 complaints were filed through the BMC's Centralised Complaint Registration System (CCRS) last year. These complaints are escalated to Levels 1 through 4 after every seven days of inaction. Of the total complaints, 13,552 reached Level 1, but ultimately only 414 were resolved. "These are either not being addressed, are taking time to be addressed, or are being addressed but not closed," said Rini Cherian, programme coordinator at Praja Foundation.

The CCRS takes in complaints through the 1916 helpline, MYBMC 24x7 app, website and written complaints. These are dialled up, going from the charge of the assistant municipal commissioner or chief engineer to the level of the deputy municipal commissioner in charge, then the additional municipal commissioner and finally the municipal commissioner.

This pattern can be seen in previous years as well. Only a fraction of the escalated complaints, ranging between 3 percent and 5 percent, were closed after reaching Level 4 between 2018 and 2021. In 2018, this meant that 19,209 complaints, 16 percent of the overall number, were left hanging. The average number of days taken to resolve the few complaints that were resolved ranged from 37 to 93.

Of the complaints that were closed, 25% took about seven days to resolve, 19% between 8 and 15 days, 14% between 16 and 25 days, 18% between 26 and 50 days, and 13% from 51 to 100 days. The remaining, 11%, took over 100 days to fix/resolve.

"Most complaints should be resolved at the first or second stage," said Cherian. "The sheer number of complaints escalated to the municipal commissioner shows that the escalation matrix does not work efficiently. The additional municipal commissioner and municipal

commissioner are in charge of monitoring the system but fixing the problems should take place within the matrix.

“We have a robust system, one of the very few in the country that takes in citizens’ complaints,” she added. “If they are addressed efficiently and on time, as promised in the charter, it can increase citizens’ trust in the system and improve their participation.”

The Praja report states that the escalation matrix was developed to address the problem of complaints remaining stuck at the lower level of the civic administration, but with no way to enforce accountability.

Municipal commissioner, I S Chahal did not respond to Hindustan’s Times calls to him.

Link : <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/mumbai-citizens-complaints-unresolved-13-138-cases-escalated-to-municipal-commissioner-level-in-2022-reveals-praja-foundation-report-101684350836120.html>