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PUBLIC EYE

*Coming together
is a beginning.
Keeping together
is progress.
Working together
is success.*

NEWSLETTER OF NEPEAN SEA ROAD CITIZENS' FORUM: ISSUE NO. 39

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IS YOUR BUILDING FIRE PROOF?

This worrisome question has often crossed your mind. And the answer can only be a disturbing NO! The reality is that no building is safe forever from the devastation – of lives and property – caused by a fire. That’s a reality. To help residents understand the causes and the preventive steps to tackle this potential enemy, NSRCForum invited the city’s experts to share their experience. On the morning of Sunday November 9 the fire safety department spent time with over 50 interested citizens on this subject. The session was highly participative: no boring lecture. Instead it lived up to its title: “Fire Safety Education”, the stress being on the last word.

Mr Parab, deputed by Fire Chief Mr Nesarikar, made a presentation that was simple and easy for all to understand. Was it interesting? Questions started pouring in after the first few slides and every question was handled well – no long lectures, only practical advice. In fact it was one of the most inter-active sessions the Forum has organized. The first and basic point for all to note was that a fire needs 3 things to exist: Fuel. Heat.



“Education” is critical, says Mr Parab

Oxygen. Citizens need to be aware of all sources of fuel (ie inflammable items) – leaking gas in the kitchen, faulty / old / exposed wiring, paper, cloth, electrical and electronic items etc. Heat can be from a stove, a lighted match, an electrical sparking etc. Worrying, because this makes every home potentially vulnerable. So, explained Mr Parab, the secret is to be equipped and ready to starve the fire of oxygen. This was so basic, yet participants acknowledged that most homes and buildings were inadequately equipped to cope with a fire.

Categories of Fire

The Fire Safety Rules have categorized fires alphabetically and recommended different strokes for different fires.

A – Combustible solids eg paper, cloths, wood etc. And you fight such sources of fire with water, or sand or ABC sprays

B – Liquids such as paints, kerosene, chemicals, oils, and such fires need to be smothered by sand or by the ABC sprays with foam or CO2

C – Where the source of fuel is gas you fight fire by smothering it, starving it of oxygen by ABC sprays.

What awakened a sense of concern and worry amongst the citizens was an honest acknowledgement that most of their homes and buildings were ill equipped to cope with fires. Sure, many buildings had “some” fire-fighting equipment but almost all admitted they did not know how to use it. Many said they were not sure whether the equipment was in working order.

Mr Parab delighted the gathering with

demonstrations of fires from different fuels/sources and how to use the different ABC hydrants. Citizens got a chance to actually use the sprays and understand that a little knowledge can also be of help. On Nepean Sea Road, there are a few narrow lanes. With cars parked on either sides, sometimes even double parked, the fire 'bumbas' may find it difficult to reach the site of the fire. Mt Parab pointed out that the 'bumba' is 4 ½ metres wide, so at least 5 ½ metres space is essential for a 'bumba'. There were questions galore on what steps to take to escape safely in the event of a fire. Do we escape to the terrace of the building? Do we escape speedily by using the lift? What do we do if the smoke is choking us? All these and many more questions were answered clearly and simply.

The Governing Council thanks the Fire Service Department for a most educative workshop. And offers special thanks for permitting the Forum to upload the full presentation on its website and facebook page for the benefit of citizens.

The presentation and this article can only introduce you to some of the key points made for fire safety but there is much more to understand and learn. The Forum strongly recommends that buildings in a cluster get together and invite the Fire Safety Department to hold such an educative and inter-active programme. And follow it up with a proper audit of what equipment is needed for each building. Plus how to use it. As was pointed out "What Burns Never Returns". Here is wishing all readers a happy – and SAFE – new year.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO BE DISPALAYED AT EVERY BUILDING

- 101
- 307611 / 2 / 3
- 3085991 / 2 / 3 \ 4
- 3086181 / 2

After phoning with details of location, hang up. Because the Department will need to call back to check it is not a hoax call!



Citizens enjoy opportunities to handle...



...and learn to use fire fighting equipment



To all our readers

from the Governing Council

MEET YOUR NEW AC-D

The normal tenure for an Assistant Commissioner at a Ward is 3 Years. Very few enjoy longer, most get considerably shorter postings. D Ward now has a new AC – Mr Devidas Kshirsagar. He comes to one of the largest – and more complex wards – after a productive stint at A Ward. The BMC continues to groom and challenge its younger management pool with assignments at managing wards. Public Eye (PE) met up with Mr Kshirsagar soon after he took charge of D Ward to get to know him and for you readers to get at least a second-hand acquaintance of the man. It was a freewheeling chat that gave an assurance that in him we have another capable – and equally important – a willing AC-D.

The last posting and his experience there

Mr Kshirsagar was at A Ward – a ward less heterogeneous than D Ward but very similar to the Malabar Hill-Breach Candy-Pedder Road precincts. Asked what gave him satisfaction there, he said it was the close and co-operative working with ALMs. This is encouraging because the Forum has always focused on working with the city's authorities and co-operation and not confrontation has been its motto.

A good example of how this resulted in success at A Ward was the removal of unauthorized hawkers who had set up shops on Dinshaw Vachha Road, near the Parsi well. The reason for success was the close co-ordination between BMC, the Police, the Collector's Office and the ALMs. When asked how he managed to keep the hawkers away, he acknowledged that confiscation of their goods and thorough follow up over the ensuing couple of weeks plus the vigilance of the ALM contributed to what was a well-planned, well-executed operation.

So can we expect a hawker-free NS Road, we asked. Mr Kshirsagar smiled and said that in A Ward there are areas where the local citizens have preferred to have hawkers. The citizens decided what goods were required (mainly fresh produce like fruits and vegetables); they also indicated the number and selected the places. This give-and-take was because citizens need the services hawkers offer. However, he stressed that

the goods, the number, the location – these were all indicated by the ALMs. And conditions were stipulated to the hawkers by BMC: The timing was specified. And an assurance to keep the area clean during and after use. Plus no extra hawkers.

The special areas of focus now

Mr Kshirsagar was very clear: every part of D Ward will get his support. When prodded, he acknowledged that the eastern half (the old city part) would clearly require greater attention and efforts. The narrow roads, the age old drainage system, waste management, development through new high-rises in an otherwise congested areas --- these are the real challenges to manage over the next three years.

Incidentally, Mr Kshirsagar was very clear that one of the major problems for not just D Ward but all of Mumbai is and will continue to be the rapidly multiplying numbers of private transport. The new suburbs in the north have the chance to start off with wider, better planned roads – a facility not easy to acquire in built-up South Mumbai. The BMC and Traffic Police are constantly evaluating ways to decongest the roads. PE took this



*Forging a new alliance.
"Public Eye" with Mr Kshirsagar*

opportunity to discuss the scheme drafted by BMC to “lease” parking spaces on public roads at night and promised to send Mr Kshirsagar issue No. 37 of Public Eye which set out the potential stumbling blocks in an otherwise well-meaning idea. (Readers can also catch up on this on the Forum’s website that has several issues of Public Eye for citizens to refer to.)

So what else?

It was good to hear that open spaces is one of the areas on top of his agenda. Mr Kshirsagar said that while western D Ward was blessed with good open spaces and parks, he has noted that the eastern half has limited open spaces for the public to enjoy. On the agenda are preserving and enhancing existing spaces, and adding a few. BMC, he said, is well aware of this need of the public, especially as the open space area per hundred is appallingly low in Mumbai compared not only to other major cities in the world but also

to the other metros of India.

Vision 2020

We had a short but positive discussion on the way forward. In fact Mr Kshirsagar has already appointed Mr Khan, civil engineer, to work closely with Mr Rahul Kadri who has developed V-2020, and to look into the implementation of the short / midterm ideas. Being of a practical bent of mind, Mr Kshirsagar has decided that a stretch of 100 to 150 metres of NSRoad would be taken up first so that problems, if any, are identified and resolved early, before work starts on the full road. Like a test market! The aim is to get as much of the work completed before the rains.

The Governing Council looks forward to a productive team effort with Mr Kshirsagar and his Ward officers. And wishes him a successful and happy stay at D Ward.

FIVE TIMER

The recent elections to the State Assembly were keenly contested, as always. Regrettably, citizens in Mumbai – and that includes the Malabar Hill precinct – do not value their vote as much as citizens in many other parts of the country, for the voter turnout was only around 50%, very low considering a state holiday had been declared to enable everyone time to vote. In fact the more dangerous zones in India got higher percentage turn-outs, from 60% to over 70%! This certainly reflects poorly on the citizens of our dear area.

The Assembly seat in the Malabar Hill area was better contested this time. And the Forum congratulates Mr Mangal Prabhat Lodha for his fifth consecutive win. To add to that, Mr Lodha registered the highest percentage of votes (67%) in all of Maharashtra. And the margin of his win was the second highest in the Mumbai Metropolitan Area.

Clearly, Mr Lodha has been living up to his motto “*Bolta nahi, karta hoon.*”

Congratulations. And the Governing Council looks forward to his continuing involvement and support to the Forum’s plans and

activities. A ‘master plan’ – or a giant wish list – has already been shared with Mr Lodha and we look forward to “*karta hoon*”.



Good work has its own rewards

NEW BROOMS SWEEP CLEAN

NSRCForum got together with Rungta Lane Residents' Association, on Swachh Bharat Day to confirm the old saying that 'new brooms sweep clean'. Rungta Lane was a reasonably *kachraa*-free area some while ago. What happened??

All 8 buildings were invited to brainstorm how this neighborhood could be kept cleaner. Regrettably, only 4 buildings' representatives could make it that windy and chilly Sunday morning.

Step One was to identify what and where the *kachraa* was to be found. Step two was to find ways and means to keep these clean(er).

Step One revealed no surprises. With cars parked along the walls of the buildings, it was seen that BMC's Clean Up Squad could not sweep under the cars. Also, separation of wet and dry waste being carried out by the appointed rag-pickers outside the buildings in the lane, resulted in waste spilling out of the waste bins. And outside shops and hawker sites, *kachraa* did tend to gather. Dog poop was the third problem.

The team agreed that solutions must be practical and would require follow-up also. Public Eye shares these so that other buildings and neighbourhoods with similar problems might also benefit.

- Every building is to undertake to keep about 4 to 6 feet around its walls swept twice daily. It may cost a little more to have their staff do this, but the benefit will be there for all to enjoy. Similarly, the enclosed 'garden' patches outside some buildings will be kept free of litter.

- With cars parked along the walls almost round the clock, it is not easy for BMC to sweep these areas. Each building will invest in long-handled brooms so that their staff can also sweep under the cars.

- Watchmen will be asked to request dog-walkers for the names and addresses of the dog owners so that they can be approached with a request that the poop is picked up, as per the BMC rules.

- BMC to be asked to properly surface the side of the Lane. Seeing it as rubble, is an open invitation for people to use it for litter and defecation

- Finally, many of the buildings were still not separating the wet from the dry garbage. Separation needs to be at "point of waste generation" ie by each flat. This requires each building on insisting that each flat has separate plastic bags – black for wet and white for dry waste. This simple



Rag pickers pick and choose



And open invitation from BMC

action by each building will ensure that only the wet waste is collected daily by the BMC Clean Up! Vans. And the dry waste can be carried away by the appointed rag-pickers – without any spillage in the lane.

The BMC representative could not be present and the team will meet him for BMC's contribution to the Swachh Rungta Lane efforts.

Will all this work? The Rungta Lane residents will take a fortnight to implement these actions. Then meet to assess and take the next steps to make this "test market operation" succeed.

When the Prime Minister calls for a Swachh Bharat, surely buildings and neighbourhoods can start with a clean-up campaign as their contribution!



More cars parked and packed equals more garbage

PRIZES FOR THE YOUNG

It's time to get the young interested in their neighbourhood and environment. So make sure the young at your home read this.

Public Eye invites them to walk through Nepean Sea Road and

- click a pic of what they specially like on Nepean Sea Road,
- and also click a pic of what they don't like and therefore would like changed or improved.

Here are the rules:

- The pictures, along with a brief note explaining why you like and why you don't like, should be emailed to the Forum at **nsrforum@gmail.com**
- This "click a pic" contest is open to all

kids under 14, residing at Nepean Sea Road. And only one entry each.

- Your entries must include your name, your full address and your age as in January 2015 -- and, of course, a pic of you.

And the complete entry must reach the editor at

nsrforum@gmail.com by January 26

- There will be 3 prizes for the lucky ones.
- Judging will be by a 3-member panel from the Governing Council and its decision will be final.

Public Eye will announce the winners in the next issue. And publish the winning entries.

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THE UP, DOWN, UP --- STORY

The shops in Rungta Lane South are an interesting story, rather representative of the city. Over the years, the shops inched their way forward, beyond their normal space. And everybody lived in peace and ignorance. Then, last year, before the rains, a BMC team with bulldozers descended on this peaceful lane and demolished all the extensions. This was done fast and furious. And before you knew it, the BMC team had vanished after vanquishing The Extenders. But life in the city never sits back. The entrepreneurial spirit never fades. Step by step,

slowly but surely, the shops stepped forward. And now semi-permanent structures are up, reclaiming the earlier extension spaces.

The question the Forum and Public Eye ask is: "Who is right? The shops in their extended avatars? Or the BMC demolition squad?"

If the shops are in the right, BMC should apologise for the demolition. If the BMC is right, it should repeat its earlier drive. And, most importantly, citizens need to be told the laws and rules under which either of the actions stands valid.



Best foot (yard?) forward!

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NSRCF

NEPEAN SEA ROAD CITIZENS' FORUM

Registered office : c/o society office of "Urvashi" C H Society, 66 Nepean Sea Road, Mumbai 400 006

MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR INDIVIDUALS

Surname _____ First Name _____

Residential address (in full) _____

Phone No. _____ E-mail _____

 Enclosed cheque No. _____ dated _____ drawn on

(Bank) _____

for the year April 2014 to March 2015

- Rs 250 for Individual Annual Membership for the year.**
 Rs 5,000 one time for Life Membership.
 Rs 3,000 one time for Life Membership for Senior Citizens (60 years and over)
 Rs 50,000 one time for Individual Patron Membership.

Please tick the relevant box above

Signature _____

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP FORM (FOR BUILDINGS / CORPORATES)

Name of Building / Institution/Company _____

Address (in full) _____

Office Phone(s) : _____ Email _____

Enclosed Cheque No. _____ dated _____ drawn on _____ (Bank)

for April 2014 to March 2015

- Rs 3,000 for Institutional Membership for the year.**
 Rs 60,000 one time for Institutional Life Membership.
 Rs 100,000 one time for Institutional Patron Membership.

Please tick the relevant box

Signature of Authorised Person _____

Please affix Stamp / Seal _____