

Access to Information in Big Cities

Mumbai

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Versatility of Mumbai

Over the century, Mumbai has evolved from a primary fishing community (“Kolis and Bhandaris”) and coastal culture to a cosmopolitan economically vibrant city. The city now inhabits residents of diverse culture and religion.

The throbbing economic activity has attracted people from far and distant places. The development boom in the recent decades has caused substantial influx of population to Mumbai. As a result of rapid growth and economic development, Mumbai has evolved into an economic hub of commerce and industrial activity related services and tourism.

Better transportation system supported by the railway network and roads in comparison to other cities has resulted in urban sprawl beyond the main city into suburbs and beyond the suburbs. The key driver attracting population to Mumbai is its robust capacity to absorb, provide / sustain livelihoods and its versatile culture base, which supports any new entrant to the city to comfortably associate and mix with the residents.

While commerce and industry have driven development and have therefore been the focus, tourism has not been far behind in the sense that due to relatively better infrastructure supporting development, hospitality and tourism has thrived and is a potential sector contributing to the city’s economy.

Given the economic factors supporting development, the city has now evolved as a hub of medical tourism due to profound development in the sector and the decentralized frame work supporting its development. Access to health infrastructure at an affordable price in equally qualified, experienced and professional personnel has contributed to demand for such services in Mumbai and setting up of a number of super-specialty hospitals and advanced care centres.

Cross-sectoral development and rising population has resulted in substantial construction activity and prevalent real estate markets have witnessed rapid rise as well as fall. While construction activity has supported development this has thrived on cheap labor due to ease of livelihood generation for unqualified population from within the state as well as urban sprawls and slums. The limited housing stock, constrained land availability for development and rising demand for housing and commercial activities, has resulted in peaking of commercial and housing prices, which has also affected affordability. While

the development is governed by Rules and Acts, these need to be reviewed critically for facilities further development.

This suggests that while Mumbai now strives to maintain its versatile culture and economy, it needs to support vulnerable socio-economic groups, create further jobs, make housing affordable and provide access to sanitation and other services. In short, it needs to do the balancing act while supporting development.

Infrastructure and socio-cultural sustenance are therefore the key issues, which will need substantial attention in ensuring an economically vibrant and socio-culturally compatible Mumbai in the future.

Urban Governance Framework

Under the Constitution of India, land, housing, urban development and provision of civic infrastructure is a State subject and under the purview of the State Government. The State Government is empowered to enforce and enact necessary laws and frame policies that support its governing function. The Central Government however plays a significant role through allocation of funds and devolution of resources within the national five-year plans for development.

The State Urban Development Department is in charge of the Town Planning Department, Urban Development Authority, urban water supply, sewerage and sanitation. The Housing and Special Assistance Department is responsible for Housing Policy, land ceilings, rent control, and reconstruction of old and dilapidated buildings, slum upgrading and supervision of foreign aided projects.

Functions of Mumbai Municipal Corporation:

In respect of the functions of the Corporation, a distinction has been made between those that are Obligatory and those that are Discretionary. The duties of the Corporation have been specified in greater detail in the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act and importantly include, construction and maintenance of works for water supply, drainage, streets flyovers and bridges, public markets and slaughter houses, urban forestry and protection of environment, planning for social and economic development, scavenging and removal & disposal of filthy matters, refuse and rubbish, regulation of places for disposal of dead and identification of new places, registration of births / deaths, provision of schools for primary education, public hospitals and dispensaries and other measures for public medical relief, removal of dangerous buildings, removal of obstructions and projections in and upon streets and other public spaces, provision of fire brigade etc.

The obligatory duties have to be provided / met with, the discretionary duties may be provided at the discretion of the Corporation and may be provided either wholly or partly. Such duties include, slum improvement and upgradation, urban poverty alleviation, furtherance of education objects other than primary education, establishing and maintaining recreational facilities like libraries, museums, galleries, botanical or

zoological collection, public parks, gardens or grounds, planting and care of trees, surveying buildings / lands, registration of marriages, census of population, construction, purchase and maintenance and management of supply of energy or gas, acquisition of movable or immovable property for delivering its duties, welfare measures for backward communities like SC/ ST, nomadic tribes, vimukta jatis and subscribing to share capital of any company or cooperative society for providing any services to Brihan Mumbai

which is directly or indirectly useful to the Corporation in delivering its duties etc.

Other Key Stakeholder Agencies

A) Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA)

MHADA is an entirely nominated body, which comes under the Housing and Special Assistance Department of the State Government. Due to acute shortage of housing after World War II, it was felt that a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to housing was necessary and so in 1976, the 4 existing boards were amalgamated in MHADA. It now works through 9 Regional Boards, 3 of which directly relate to Mumbai. The Mumbai Housing and Area Development Board, wherein it interacts with the MCGM, as the civic body has to maintain the facilities it creates; the Mumbai Buildings Repair and Reconstruction Board which repairs even private buildings with municipal permission and Mumbai Slum Improvement Board, wherein it has to interact, all the time with the MCGM as it provides basic civic amenities like common toilets, roads / pathways, water taps, storm water drain and street lights in slum pockets on govt. or private lands.

B) Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA)

The Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) was set up in 1995 under the provisions of the Maharashtra Slum Areas Act, 1971 with the Chief Minister of Maharashtra as Chairperson, a Senior IAS officer as full time CEO and 14 other members. The SRA has the status of a corporate entity from 1997. By amendment to the MRTP Act, 1966, it has been declared as a planning authority, to function as a local authority for the slum areas under its jurisdiction. It can survey slum areas, formulate schemes for slum rehabilitation and get them implemented. As such, its work for slums relates to work done by MHADA and MCGM. But it enjoys a privileged position, being a very powerful body. This has led to a contentious issue in respect of the Transfer of Development Rights and Additional Floor Space Index given to private developers / builders.

MUMBAI

Population

Year	Total in millions)
1901	0.92
1951	2.994
1981	8.243
1991	9.925
2001	11.978
2005	12.736
2031	15.659

Year (Census 2001)

Male	6710863
Female	5267587
Total	11978450

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Sex Ratio 1000 : 809

MUMBAI

Population Profile

SC/ST/ Minority

Category	Male	Female	% w.r.t. total Population
Total	6710863	5267587	100
SC	505595	432165	7.82
ST	144085	111981	2.14
Minorities	1122726	952694	17.33

Literacy Ratio

Category	Male	Female	Total
All Communities	78.44	66.77	72.6
SC	63.37	57.13	60.25
ST	56.09	45.62	50.86
Minorities	48.98	39.26	44.12

MUMBAI

Slum Population

Year	Slum Population	Total Population	% of Slum Population
2001	6.9 million	11.91 million	57.31
2010	6.5 million	12.91 million	50.00
2020	6.03 million	15.03 million	40.12

14, 30,000 households are in slums.

There are 16,378 old buildings majority of which were constructed prior to 1940 which needs reconstruction.

Migration Trends in Mumbai

The city is seen as a one that holds promise for sustaining livelihood, so as to make a decent living. The city witness significant migration every year as evident from the following table.

Migration Trends in Greater Mumbai

Year	Net Migration (in million)
1951	0.95
1961	0.60
1971	0.89
1981	1.07
1991	0.28

Employment Pattern and Growth Trends in Mumbai.

Sr.No.	Sector	1980		1998	
		Employment	% Share	Employment	% Share
1	Primary	24,009	1.09	7,059	0.27
2	Secondary	805,468	36.62	492,030	18.74
3	Tertiary	1369,904	62.29	2,126,659	80.99

Right To Information

Right to Information Act 2005 came into existence throughout India on 12th October 2005. There is separate Information Commission for Central Govt. establishments and 28 State Information Commissions – one for each state. Some of these states had their own Right to Information Act before. However, after 12th October 2005, State Acts were repealed and now there is single uniform act throughout the country.

The Right to Information Act is intended to be a tool to deepen democracy, accelerate development and help in the eradication of corruption in public services.

Unfortunately, very little organised effort has been made or is being made to make common people conscious of their rights and therefore they have not evolved into the full status of free citizens of a free country. The most disappointing fact in this connection is that our educational system has not made any effort to promote consciousness of citizens rights through instruction in class rooms or text books. Aristotle preached the importance of education and citizenship training 24 centuries ago when he said that the “the greatest of all means for ensuring the stability of construction is the education of the citizens in the spirit of the constitution.” The Preamble of the French Declaration of Rights of Man of 1789 recognized this truth when it said, “Ignorance, disregard or contempt of the rights of man are the sole causes of public misfortunes and governmental corruption.”

Take the case of the most serious problem facing us as democracy and as a developing country, namely, all pervading corruption in our society. How do we tackle this problem of corruption ? The most successful instrument in our hand to fight the cancer of corruption in our society is to be conscious of our rights as citizens.

The Constitution had given the people the powerful protection of Fundamental Rights and the RTI Act has given them the additional strength through access to information. These rights if exercised diligently will be adequate to fight the cancer of corruption. But the consciousness about these rights has to be first ingrained in the hearts of the citizens as otherwise the citizens will continue to be “subjects” as before in spite of their legal title as citizens.

Maharashtra – Maharashtra with Mumbai as capital city is one of the highly progressive, industrial state in the country. The state has glorious history of activism even much before independence in 1947. The people of Maharashtra in General and Mumbai in particular have been using this act to get information from govt. and govt. controlled / substantially assisted bodies. Maharashtra has largest number request for information in one year in the country (and possibly in the world) and Mumbai has largest number of requests in the metro cities in the country.

	Year		No.of application	No. of 1 st appeal	No. of 2 nd appeal
Maharashtra	2006	Received	123571	10789	5942
		Disposed	113081	9871	621
	2007	Received	316002	27175	10628
		Disposed	306185	26143	3077
Mumbai	2007	Received	65241		
		Disposed	63815		

Requests under RTI in Mumbai, 2007

Sr.No.	Organisation	No. of application received	No. of application disposed
1	Mumbai Municipal Corporation	38826	38326
2	Police	7306	7121
3	Housing Authority	7089	6502
4	Slum Rehabilitation Authority	6979	6974
5	Co-Operative Deptt.	1861	1813
6	Lands Deptt.	1193	1157
7	High Court	617	608
8	Charity Commission	567	503
	Total	64438	63014

Mumbai account for about 10% population of State of Maharashtra and account for about 21% of RTI application. The awareness about RTI among the population, role of activist and fairly good beauracritic response are major reasons for this. Mumbai Municipal Corporation naturally receives the largest no. of application because the day to day problems and grievances always pertains to areas like amenities in slums, assessment on the properties, water supply, encroachment, unauthorised construction, markets etc come in the domain of Municipal Corporation. Since slum dwelling population in Mumbai is about 57%, slum rehabilitation authorities also receives large no. of application. Housing problem in Mumbai is very acute. There are over 16,000 old and dilapidated buildings. Therefore people elicit information about slums reconstruction and general housing activity. Because of large no. of co-operative housing societies in Mumbai, co-operation department also receives large no. of application. Police is one of the major departments in Mumbai and people seek lot of information pertaining to life, liberty and crime. People are increasingly using this act to seek information pertaining to administrative side of apex court. Therefore one can surmise that in metro cities the major area of concern are civic amenities, housing, slums development and crime.

The 3 years experience of RTI in the city of Mumbai and the State shows that, people are rediscovering the freedom of information with great enthusiasm. We have to see that this enthusiasm is channelised properly for eliminating corruption and increasing accountability.