

Public Concern



The Quarterly Newsletter of Public Concern for Governance Trust (PCGT)

April 2019

Profile

Public Concern for Governance Trust (PCGT), a registered trust, founded by concerned citizens, mobilises public opinion, increases public participation and activism towards promoting honesty, transparency and accountability in governance.

Vision

To strive for good governance, contain corruption, uphold and inculcate values and enhance Sadbhavna in the citizens.

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Voice of Youth

PCGT ANNUAL EVENT 2019



(From left to right)- Guest of Honour Adv. Afroz Shah, PCGT Trustee Mrs. Rekha Shahani, PCGT Chairman Mr. Julio Ribeiro along with Chief Guest Padma Shri Dr. Prakash and Dr. Mrs Mandakini Amte)

PCGT Annual Event was held at Birla Matoshree Sabhagar on 8th Feb., 2019, based on the theme "Voice of Youth". The Chief guest for the evening was Dr. Prakash Amte and his wife, Dr. Mandakini Amte, along with Guest of Honour, Adv. Afroz Shah. The event was witnessed by more than 1000 guests including students from different schools and colleges.

EDITORIAL

FARMERS' DISTRESS



The festival of Holi signifies the commencement of harvest season. After post harvest operations such as threshing etc. the crop

surplus hits the agricultural markets on the day of Baisakhi/Vihu/Bihu. The farmers then get busy paying off dues and preparing the farms for next sowing season beginning in June/July depending on the monsoon.

Farmers remain under great distress. Rising input costs and poor incomes from sale of crops dog them. Use of some of the genetically modified seeds already expensive, require more fertilisers and water. At the same time falling prices in the international market have depressed earnings. The support prices declared by the Governments, can be raised only to a limit, for higher prices push up living costs in Urban areas as well as affect secondary sectors of the economy.

Financing costs are important for farmers. While micro financing agencies have been active, they have their own issues. They borrow money from government on 7% to 8% and have to add 5% operating costs and require another 3% to 5% to service their own financing costs. So they can lend only at 16% to 18% interest to farmers which is not a small cost. Advances by banks despite their priority to agricultural lending are inhibited by several factors

such as securing the loans. Depleting sizes of the agricultural holdings with each generation make employment of technology for various operations difficult and uneconomical.

Small and marginal farmers are the ones who feel the economic stress the most. So far, Governments and political parties have not formulated a policy that shall systematically address the situation except repeated waiver of loans which do nothing to redress the problem but are potentially politically lucrative.

A holistic policy to deal with the situation is what is required. It would take care of finance needs but also address issues of providing proper markets, assured water supply, ways of providing guidance on crops to be sown. An effort has to be made overall to ensure surplus with the farmers at all times, even in a poor monsoon year when crops may fail. This requires providing an additional, alternate source of income to the farmers. "Diversification" thus is the need of the hour.

Diversification for the farmers would first of all mean adapting to different crops which can provide additional income. It, however, requires easy access to markets and a system providing guidance on what crops the land will easily support. Since this type of diversification still leaves the farmer dependent on agricultural operations, we need to look at alternate avocations such as goatery, poultry, dairy farming and the like which can be an additional source of income. These require providing necessary skill

sets to make a success of these operations. While efforts at skilling farmers have been undertaken by governments and also other social organisations, these efforts are by and large confined to providing skill sets of jobs such as driving heavy vehicles, serving as security men at establishments and manning counters at various food and other chains. While aimed at reducing dependence on farm income, these professions are at the low end of the income bracket and thus not very successful. Skilling has to be done in other avocations.

There has been so far very little effort at tapping the huge potential of skilling the womenfolk in the rural areas. This silent one half of the populace are intrinsically talented and capable of taking up various skills which could provide additional income to the household. Weaving cloth, weaving baskets, making spices etc. are some of the trades the women could easily take to. They of course are capable of and can be trained in professions hereto considered bastions of menfolk too. Some efforts have been made by some non-government organisations to train and provide skill sets to women and provide them some additional income.

A holistic approach to ameliorate the rural distress is begging to be put in place. The political parties going to polls need to think and place their views on record through their manifestos. We have so far heard only of loan waivers which are not the answer.

— Sanjeev Dayal

PCGT PUNE

ONE DAY SEMINAR ON AIR POLLUTION



Mr. S. C. Nagpal introducing PCGT



Dr. Sandeep Salvi addressing the audience



Dignitaries on the dais - (from left) Mr. S. C. Nagpal, Dr. Sandeep Salvi, Mr. Satish Khot, Mr. Amitabh Sinha

A one day seminar on Air Pollution was organized by the Pune Chapter of PCGT in association with Deccan Education Society's Shri Navalmal Firodia Law College. The seminar was attended by academicians, environment activists and college students. Mr. Amitabh Sinha, Resident Editor of the Indian Express and Dr. Sundeep Salvi, Director of Chest Research Foundation were the keynote speakers for the session.

The session commenced with an introduction of PCGT by Mr. S. C. Nagpal, President of PCGT. He elaborated upon the various activities and undertakings of the Trust.

Mr. Amitabh Sinha enlightened the attendees about the various policy related issues that form an integral aspect in dealing with the issue of air pollution. The various facets of Air Quality Index and how it helps us understand the levels of air pollution were elaborated upon. He also discussed how the crisis in Delhi can be used to prevent rising pollution levels across the country.

Dr. Sundeep Salvi threw light on the neuro-biological aspects of air pollution and how it is resulting not only in a rise of respiratory disorders among the populace but also in the decline of cognitive abilities among the younger generations.

Placing reliance on scientific studies, he suggested practical measures to control air pollution on individual and collective levels.

Mr. S. Khot asked the students to make use of the theoretical knowledge and take initiatives on a practical level in order to get time bound results in the control of air pollution.

Dr. Pratapsinh Salunke, Assistant Professor of Law at Shri Navalmal Firodia Law College, delivered the vote of thanks and assured full Co-operation from the institute in curtailing the ever rising air pollution.

YOUTH FOR GOVERNANCE

FIFTH B. G. DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Fifth B. G. Deshmukh Memorial Lecture was conducted on 11th February, 2019 at Ramesh Pada Thadhani Auditorium in Jai Hind College, Churchgate. The Chief Speaker was Mr. Chaman Lal, Former Director General of Police, Nagaland. The topic of the lecture was "Corruption free Governance and Human Rights". Mr. Chaman Lal emphasised on transparency and accountability to fight the perils of corruption. He compared India to various countries like China, US and the Gulf countries and explained how our country should have zero tolerance towards corruption. This lecture was attended by 300 students from different colleges.



Dignitaries on the dais



Student asking questions

DIALOGUE ON 'UPLIFTMENT OF WEAKER SECTIONS THROUGH RESERVATIONS'

A dialogue on 'Upliftment of Weaker Sections of Society through Reservations' was held on 12th March, 2019, at St. Andrews' College, Bandra. Mr. Chaman Lal spoke about SC & ST, Mid-day meal scheme for the poor and human rights violation on the marginalised sections of the society. He emphasised on the importance of reservations to the marginalised communities. If not provided, it would be a gross violation of Human Rights. The Session was attended by students.



Mr. Julio Ribeiro with Chief Speaker Mr. Chaman Lal

KUCHH AUR

A value based programme for students in schools

Large class sizes and constantly changing requirements of the education system along with rigorous curriculum makes it difficult for teachers to focus on character building in the busy schedule of a school day.

Our staff conducts regular classes in various schools on 'Lessons in Responsible Citizenship'. Love, as a value was chosen to depict one's feeling. Love for self, parents, family, friends, environment, the city we live in and the universe at large was taken into consideration. Students shared their feelings, insecurities and fears and were given anecdotes and stories as to how love and respect can save so many relationships and issues.

Podar International (SSC Section), Purshotam High School, Sardar Vallabhai Patel Vividhlaxi Vidyalaya and Anjuman Islam Dr. Mohammad Ishaq Jamkanawala Girls High School and Jr. College students participated in the annual event on 8th Feb. 2019. In a beautiful dance and play form they depicted all the issues that were of concern to today's youth. Through dialogue and dance they depicted the issue of gender equality, RTI, harassment, corruption, pride for our

nation, respect for elders and focusing on governance rather than criticising the society's deficiencies.

Gender Equality Activity

The activity involved a little role reversal where the boys had to behave like girls and *vice versa*. The few words the kids had to improvise on were "running", "action/fighting" (like the movies) and "dancing". This activity in particular was an eye-opener on how our society stereotypes the genders. The girls became extremely carefree and bold when they had to act like boys while dancing and fighting, whereas the boys turned extremely shy and modest while doing the same. The kids were made to understand that gender equality starts from home. The brother and sister need to be treated equally. They should both go to school. If the sister is made to wash the utensils, the brother can also volunteer for the same. There is no book written that gives the rules about the work

a boy should do and the work a girl should do. The students were also requested to express their gratitude and appreciation for all the women in their life as we were focusing on



Students during Gender Equality Activity

'Love and Gender Equality'. These values are important because they help us to grow and develop. They help us to create the future we want to experience. Every individual and every organization is involved in many hundreds of decisions every day. The decisions we make are a reflection of our values and beliefs and are directed towards a purpose.

Yashasweeta Kokate and Kumar Kunal attended a 7 day International Conference on "Children as Actors for Transforming Society (CATS)" at Asia Plateau, Panchgani, Maharashtra, from February 9 to 16, 2019. The aim of this program was to understand the various issues faced by children and how these children can co-ordinate with adults to bring a change in the society to make it a safe and sound world for themselves. It was a great exposure for them as it enabled them to understand various intricacies of child rights and to meet various people who have been working in this field for a very long time. The learnings from this exposure visit would be a great help in carrying forward the Project on Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse. Children and adults from various parts of the world attended this Conference.



Initiatives
of Change

CATS ASIA 2019

Asia Plateau, Panchgani - February 11 to 16, 2019

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

RTI SESSIONS

RTI Cell of PCGT organized a Session on "Citizen Participation: A Key to a Successful Democracy" for the First Year Law students of B.L.S., LL.B. Course of Pravin Gandhi College of Law, Vile Parle, Mumbai, on 26/02/2019. The session was conducted by guest speaker, Mr. Shailesh Gandhi, Former Central Information Commissioner and renowned Social Activist.

Mr. Shailesh Gandhi urged the students to make an informed decision in electing a responsible government rather than repenting later on.



On January 20, 2019, an RTI Session was organized by the Public Concern for Governance Trust in association with the Bombay Catholic Sabha at St Anthony's Church in Vakola, attended by 70 people, young and old, belonging to various walks of life. Mr. G. R. Vora, an RTI activist himself, conducted the session.

SUCCESS STORIES

A BMC Ex-employee gets 5-year pending Provided Fund through RTI.

Mr. Rajesh Babariya, a retired employee of BMC could get his long pending PF dues from BMC. with the help of PCGT's RTI processes, in January 2019, four year after his retirement!



AFTER 40 YEARS OF WAIT MANDAKINI GETS MHADA FLAT NOW BECAUSE OF PCGT'S INITIATIVE



Mrs. Mandakini Damodar Pabrekar approached PCGT complaining that the original documents concerning her flat at Byculla, handed over to MHADA for allotment of a flat after redevelopment, were lost sight of by the MHADA and though MHADA having offered her a flat in the redevelopment scheme, subsequently declared her ineligible for a tenement as her original documents were not traceable. In the meanwhile, eight others of the same group (26) were offered flats while she and remaining others were left out. Taking up her complaint, Mr. Ribeiro wrote (in July 2017) to Vice President & CEO, MHADA quoting the PCGT's RTI correspondence with the MHADA that whereas anyone who is a tenant of a Transit Camp of MHADA for five continuous years is entitled to get a flat in redeveloped building, the denial of the same by MHADA to this widow and others even after 40 years of stay in the Transit Camp is a case of gross injustice and urged the CEO to get the matter probed and justice rendered early. As a result of Mr. Ribeiro's letter to the MHADA Chief and further RTI correspondence, the MHADA has finally allotted a flat to Mrs. Mandakini Pabrekar and others, much to their delight, in February 2019 in Matunga area of Mumbai.

PCGT's RTI initiative to check unauthorised parking in Grant Road area

PCGT assisted Mr. Rasiklal Shah, a resident of Grant Road, through RTI processes, in stopping unauthorised parking under the skywalk in Nana Chowk area and getting the area beautified by the BMC.

ANTI CSA CAMPAIGN

PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN SCHOOLS : A WAY FORWARD

In order to work towards child welfare and to prevent child sexual abuse in school premises, PCGT has resolved to collaborate with various agencies keeping in mind the roles and responsibilities of Police Authorities, School staff, Parents and NGOs who are working for the care of children. We have studied various Indian laws, directions given by High Courts & Supreme Courts and guidelines issued by Central & State Government for child welfare and to prevent child sexual abuse.

The aim of the project is to collaborate with different agencies including Police, NGOs, parents of children and school authorities to bring awareness about the seriousness of the issue and that the laws are effectively implemented on the ground. This project seeks to support these agencies in their effort by providing assistance as required by them.

We have formed a group called "Anti-CSA Campaign" that consists of members from PCGT, parents and social activists". A Mobile App called "Darwin" has been created by this group which would provide a digital platform for awareness on CSA. It is still at its initial stage and we are working to improve the App to make it more people friendly.

To understand the ground reality, we prepared a questionnaire addressed to all schools including BMC, Aided and Private; based on the provisions of POCSO Act, 2012 and Government Resolution (GR) issued by Maharashtra State on June 2, 2018. It helped us to know the progressive results achieved in implementation of guidelines aimed at tackling child sexual abuse in schools.

Based on the kind of responses we have received from 21 schools that

we interviewed, it is quite evident that most of the school authorities are unaware about the various provisions of POCSO Act, 2012 and are completely ignorant about the GR issued by Maharashtra Government on 2nd June 2018. It is also the fault of government that no serious effort has been taken by it to spread awareness and effective implementation of the guidelines under GR.

The next step of PCGT is to associate with the Police Department to be a part of "Police Didi" programme and take the project forward. It would be done by providing training to the trainers and including more contents in the program along with providing assistance as needed by the Police authority to run this programme more systematically and in an efficient manner.

SUCCESS STORIES

MbPT Recovery

At the initiative of Mr. Julio Ribeiro, Chairman, PCGT, and through RTI processes, the Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) could start recovering huge outstanding dues (about Rs. 300 Cr) from various Public Sector and private sector firms.

Mr. Ribeiro's letter to Municipal Commissioner to speed up payment of pension benefits to MCGM employees

The PCGT, through RTI, gathered the following data on pending cases of pension payments on the basis of which Mr. Ribeiro wrote to Municipal Commissioner stating that payment of pension to a retired employee without delay is a must and urged the Commissioner to ensure prompt payment of pension dues to all the employees.

No. of Pending Cases

- a) Pension/ Family pension : 154
- b) Gratuity : 101
- c) Provident Fund : 172
- d) Encashment of Leave Salary : 939



Promoting honesty, transparency and accountability in governance

February 25, 2019

Trustees : J.F. Ribeiro, Dora Gandhi, Dr. R. K. Anand, Prasad Chandran, Sangeet Dapal, S.S. Par, M.R. Reddy, Mr. Rakha Shaha, Gulam A. Waharway

Shri Ajoy Mehta, Municipal Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, Municipal Head Office, Mahapalika Marg, MUMBAI - 400001

Dear Shri Mehta,

You will recall that I had written to you on 7th December, 2017, (copy enclosed) pointing out that pension and retirement benefits are not being settled in time with the result that aggrieved employees have been approaching PCGT for help. In 2-3 cases we used the RTI and got relief for the aggrieved.

Using the RTI we found that in 19 of the 24 wards that answered our queries, pension was not paid to 154 retired employees for one to five years after retirement. 939 have not received their leave salary, 101 have yet to get gratuity amount due to them, 172 are waiting for the disbursement of PF amounts and 38 have yet to get DC-1. Ward-wise details are attached. I remember that payment of pension on retirement was considered a must during our service careers. I do not know if the same instructions are in vogue, but you will agree that people who retire are more in need of what is legally due to them since pension amounts to only half of what they used to earn in service.

PCGT brings the fact to your notice for whatever action you think is required.

Regards,
Julio Ribeiro
Chairman

Encl: As above

B2, Maharashtra Chambers, 22, Bhamburda Road, Brach Candy, Mumbai - 400 016.
Tel : (022) 2352 6424 Telex: (022) 2352 6452, e-mail: publicconcern@gmail.com, Website: www.pcgtrg.org

Registered under Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950

PUBLIC CONCERN FOR GOVERNANCE TRUST
Promoting honesty, transparency and accountability in governance

Date: November 21, 2018

To: Shri Sangeet Dapal, Chairman, Mumbai Port Trust, Plot House, Shree/Vishalika Marg, Mumbai-400001

From: S.S. Par, Mr. Rakha Shaha, Gulam A. Waharway

Subject: Outstanding dues from various government/private parties to Mumbai Port Trust.

Some of the law students entering with PCGT had filed RTI applications before the Mumbai Port Trust seeking to know, the outstanding dues payable to the Port Trust by various government/private parties.

From the responses of the PIOs of the Port Trust, we understood that Rs. 300 Crores (approximately) has been outstanding, which is a matter of concern.

Copies of our RTI applications and the RTI responses of the Port Trust authorities are enclosed for your information.

With regards,
JULIO F. RIBEIRO

Encl:
1) RTI applications dated 27.06.2018 and 03.10.2018
2) Replies of the PIOs dated 30.06.2018 and 31.10.2018

B2, Maharashtra Chambers, 22, Bhamburda Road, Brach Candy, Mumbai - 400 016.
Tel : (022) 2352 6424 Telex: (022) 2352 6452, e-mail: publicconcern@gmail.com, Website: www.pcgtrg.org

Registered under Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950

RTI CLINIC IN MUMBAI**PCGT :**

Every Tuesday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

For appointments and details :

Call : 022-2352 6426 / 2352 6452

Address : B/2, Mahalaxmi Chambers
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
Mumbai-400 026

E-mail : publicconcern@gmail.com

RTI CLINIC IN PUNE**Pune Municipal Corporation**

Every Friday between 11 a.m. & 2 p.m

For appointments and details :

Call : Mr. Marutirao Sail

Tel : 020-6400 5613

Address : Nagrik Suvidha Kendra
Pune Municipal Corporation
Shivaji Nagar, Pune-411 005

E-mail : pcgt@rediffmail.com

Visit us at : www.pcgt.org

DONATIONS TO PCGT

All activities of PCGT are undertaken from the funds received from the donors. People who want to donate any amount of ₹ 1,000/- and above may please issue cheques in favour of 'Public Concern For Governance Trust'.

Donations to PCGT qualify for deduction u/s. 80G(5)(VI) of the Income-tax Act, 1961.

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B/2, Mahalaxmi Chambers,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
Mumbai-400 026.



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To _____

