

Public Concern

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

April 2021

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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PCGT CONCLAVE ON UNITY IN DIVERSITY



Mr. J. F. Ribeiro, Mr. Gulam Vahanvaty and Mr. Satish Sahney as the panellists

Unity in Diversity has been a hallmark feature of the Indian society and culture since ages. However, with rising instances of communal hatred, it is essential for the youth to understand, evaluate and implement this feature in their day to day life. We, at PCGT, strive to promote Sadbhavna in citizens and ethical values amongst the youth. In furtherance to this vision, PCGT in association with SVKM's Pravin Gandhi College of Law (PGCL) organized the maiden edition of the PCGT Conclave on the theme "Unity in Diversity" on 20th - 21st February, 2021.

The Conclave was organized virtually with the assistance of the Lead Campus Ambassadors (Lead CAs) and the Campus Ambassadors (CAs) of PCGT. The Conclave hosted around 500 attendees over the course of two days through a variety of events like Oxford Debate, Paper Presentations and Dialogues etc. on the various aspects of Unity in Diversity - ranging from lessons from the past to its relevance in the current times.

The Conclave started off with Opening Remarks by Mr. V. P. Raja and a Panel Discussion on 'Communal Harmony' with Mr. J. F. Ribeiro, Mr. Satish Sahney and Mr. Gulam Vahanvaty as the panellists and Mr. Ayush Ramesh (Lead CA) as the Moderator. This was followed by the preliminary rounds of the Oxford Debate in which 32 teams participated from colleges across the country. The first day of the Conclave concluded with a Public Lecture on 'Unity in Diversity - Lessons from History and the Way Forward' by Mr. Jawhar Sircar (Former Culture Secretary, Govt. of India).

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EDITORIAL



The second wave of the Covid-19 which hit Maharashtra and has now spread to the entire country will take a much heavier toll than the first round of the pandemic. With the advantage of hindsight we now know that our premature belief in the invincibility of our race from the virus was misplaced. Parallel to the shattering of this belief was also the rude shock of realizing that our great Leader was not as omnipotent and omniscient as we were made to think.

If we had the humility to learn lessons from the experience of other countries of Europe we would have prepared for the pandemic's Second Coming, scaled up our medical

infrastructure and also the vaccination drives. We are struggling at present to catch up and catch up we will but not before notching many unnecessary deaths.

The Covid has forced P.C.G.T. to adjust to the Google and Zoom formats of interaction with our staff and our students. Physical attendance in the office is all but over, at least till the Virus is finally tamed. Our staff has taken to the new format like ducks to water! Numerous webinars were arranged by the Kucch Aur, YFG and Leadership Development Project Managers, as well as by the R.T.I cell where our Associate, Ranga Rao takes daily sessions with the interns who register with us regularly every month.

I must not forget to highlight the contribution of Sonali Shelar, in charge of our project to protect women and children from sexual harassment. She has conducted several training sessions with teachers in various Municipal and government aided schools and kept in touch with the police

so that P.C.G.T. can help the Police Didi programme that seeks to implement the POCSO Act. On-line we honoured thirteen Police Didi's on World Women's Day for their selfless work in protecting school-going children from being molested.

The Two-day Conclave on 'Unity in Diversity' was a great success. The address of ex-I.A.S officer Jawahar Sircar and of the legal luminary, Aspi Chinoy, deserve special mention. Similarly, the presence of Justice Ajit Shah, formerly Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court and formerly Chairman of the National Law Commission at our Third NYP (National Youth Parliament) event also needs to be highlighted. Justice B.N. Srikrishna and Justice Madan Lokur, both ex-Judges of the Supreme Court, presided over the First and Second editions of the N.Y.P so meticulously planned and organized by our Staff member Shivam Jain Kakadia and his Happy Team of Students.

– Julio Ribeiro

KUCHH AUR

During the months of January – March 2021, to help children imbibe values Kuchh Aur held sessions on various values like Respect, Relationship and Love, Relationship with Friendship, Relationship with Self, Self Acceptance, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment and Gratitude with different aided and private schools and communities of Children of the World at Nerul, Jui Nagar and Rabale. The students were taught that positive teachings help them tread the right path in life. They were sessions that helped students become responsible individuals capable of demarcating right and wrong. Kuchh Aur covered more than 1000 students via Zoom.

PCGT Trustee Mrs. Rekha Shahani held few sessions for students of Junior College of Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhania School, Thane, on “Your Attitude decides your Altitude”. She

shared with them on how they could view barriers and overcome them to achieve personal and professional growth. While she said many may believe that talent, opportunity, money, IQ, loving families, or positive outlooks are the real barometers for determining one’s success potential, she shared they were secondary to the possession of a healthy positive self-portrait. She motivated the students to have greater aspirations in life in working on their self-pictures in all areas of their young lives. She told them any place where you find negativity, pessimism or indifference about your own dreams or abilities, you have an assignment for self-portrait improvement to work on it.

In collaboration with Life Foundation, sessions were also held with the students of Nirmala Niketan who are pursuing Bachelor of Social Work

(BSW) and Masters of Social Work (MSW).

Students from various schools participated in the Multi-faith prayers on 14th March, 2021, at Kamla High School (KHS), Khar. To commemorate the death anniversary of the Founder Principal N. D. Gurbaxani, kalpataru (wishing tree) was held and the students were gifted with stationery and books. Two students were also awarded the Best Student trophy for their involvement in the Kuchh Aur programme in the name of the Founder of KHS who believed in inculcating strong values and character building in the students. PCGT interns, during this period participated in the Kuchh Aur sessions and also made a presentation of the various values that they had prepared during their internship.



Sessions with SVPVV School



Sessions with Law Interns



YOUTH FOR GOVERNANCE

The following webinars / virtual sessions were organized by PCGT from January to March 2021, witnessing participation from students across Mumbai.

Topic of Webinar	Date	Speakers
Protection of mobile from Phishing scam	January 8, 2021	ACP Dr. Ashok Bagul
Dialogues for democracy, lessons from diversity	January 20, 2021	Mr. Anil Swarup (Former Coal and Education Secretary)
Ethical dilemmas of a civil servant	January 23, 2021	Mr. Anil Swarup (Former Coal and Education Secretary)
Constitutional Government	January 26, 2021	Adv Mihir Desai (Human Rights lawyer)
Importance of Youth Parliament	February 18, 2021	Mr. V. P. Raja (Chairman, PCGT)
Being the juice of life	February 23, 2021	Mr. Arun Wakhlu
Wildlife in India	February 24, 2021	Dr. Parvish Pandya (Director, Sanctuary Nature Foundation)
Traversing the contours and inward basis of the farmers' movement	March 4, 2021	Ms Simran Kaur (Associate, Citizens for Public Leadership)
How youth can be better governance	March 21, 2021	Mr. Shailesh Gandhi (RTI Activist)



Mr Anil Swarup addressing the gathering



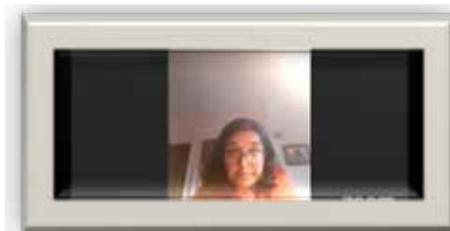
Mr Anil Swarup interacting with PCGT Trustees



Mr Mihir Desai speaking to students on Constitutional Government



Mr Arun Wakhlu explaining to students about the importance of meditation



Miss Simran Kaur talking on Farmers' Protest



Mr Parvish Pandya talking to audience on wildlife in India

PCGT CONCLAVE ON UNITY IN DIVERSITY

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On the second day, i.e. February 21, 2021 a Dialogue on 'Constitution of India - A Symbol of Unity in Diversity' was delivered by Mr. Aspi Chinoy (Senior Counsel, Bombay High Court). After the dialogue, Paper Presentations were held in which students from various colleges presented papers and articles under the broad theme of Unity in Diversity. This was followed by the semi-final and final rounds of the Oxford Debate and the Closing Ceremony. Dr. R. K. Anand delivered the keynote address on 'Unity in Diversity: The Indian Perspective' at the Closing Ceremony and Mr. Raja announced the winners of the Oxford Debate and Paper Presentations and delivered the Concluding Remarks. The Conclave therefore not only honed the leadership and communication skills of the Lead CAs and the CAs, but it also instilled the value of *Sadbhavna* in citizens and ethical values in the youth by making them participate in a variety of events under the broad theme of the Conclave viz. *Unity in Diversity*.



Mr. Jawhar Sircar delivering a Lecture on 'Unity in Diversity - Lessons from History and the Way Forward'



Mr. Aspi Chinoy delivering a Dialogue on 'Constitution of India - A Symbol of Unity in Diversity'



Dr. R. K. Anand delivering the keynote address on 'Unity in Diversity: The Indian Perspective' at the Closing Ceremony of the Conclave

RTI / RTS

Thanks to the good offices of Mr. Julio Ribeiro, the Founder Trustee and former Chairman, PCGT, Mr. Sanjay Bhatia, IAS (Retd.) the newly appointed Upa Lokayukta, Govt. of Maharashtra, had readily agreed to the request of PCGT to impart internship to some of the former interns of PCGT. Accordingly, a batch of 15 ex-interns of PCGT had interned for four days in January 2021 under the Upa Lokayukta, learning the application of various provisions of the Maharashtra Lokayukta and Upa-Lokayuktas Act, 1971, which would help them to fight corruption in governance.

LEGAL INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

In view of a spate of requests for legal internship from some of the former interns of PCGT, one of the ex-interns of PCGT, Adv. (Mr.) Rhythm Buaria, now practising Law at New Delhi has readily offered to spare his time and contacts either at Delhi and/or at Mumbai to find suitable Advocates or firms depending on the requirements of the Law students aspiring for legal internships.

Mr. Rhythm is a man of few words but a mountain of action. During the COVID-19 lockdown crisis in 2020, instead of idling away his time, he made a seminal contribution to the RTI Act, 2005, by associating himself with Mr. Shailesh Gandhi in analysing the higher judiciary's rulings on the Second Appeal Decisions of the former and brought out a compendium on the same for the benefit of RTI appellants, Public Authorities(PAs) and other public-spirited citizens. A glorious future awaits him in the legal field.

Therefore, those students desirous of having legal internship as a part of their academic syllabus may contact Mr. Rhythm by email: rhythm.buaria@gmail.com

He can also be reached on WhatsApp at: 99200 37152

RTI / RTS

CERTIFICATE TRAINING PROGRAMME ON RTI AND RTS

A One-day Online Certificate Training Programme on Right to Information (RTI) and Right to Services (RTS) was organized by Public Concern for Governance Trust in association with SVKM's Pravin Gandhi College of Law on Sunday, March 14, 2021 on Zoom. This was in furtherance to the success of a similar training programme organized by PCGT in February 2020 at the Indian Merchants' Chamber (IMC), Churchgate, Mumbai.

The training programme this year was organized with the assistance of the Lead Campus Ambassadors (Lead CAs) and the Campus Ambassadors (CAs) of PCGT and witnessed participation of around 60 students and young professionals across the country. The Opening Address was delivered by Mr. J. F. Ribeiro, who shared the vision and mission of PCGT with the participants and highlighted the importance of youth in ensuring

that the government is transparent and accountable. This was followed by a session on "Demystifying Governance" delivered by Mr. V. P. Raja, which helped the students better understand their rights and duties vis a vis good governance.

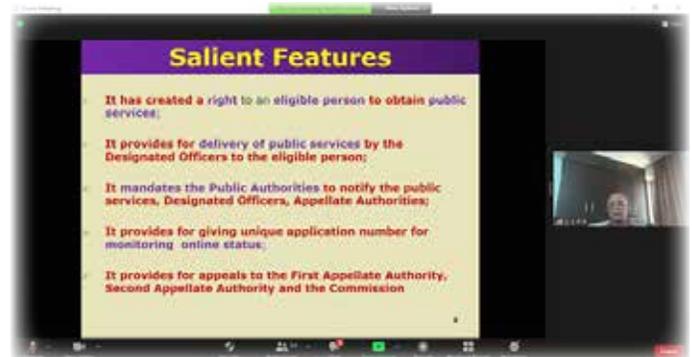
A session on "RTI and the Indian Constitution" was delivered by Dr. Rashmi M. Oza (Principal, Chembur Karnataka College of Law and Former Head of Dept. of Law, University of Mumbai), who highlighted the constitutional relevance of freedom of information in a democracy. This was followed by a session by Mr. D. S. Ranga Rao on "RTS with special emphasis on the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015", who gave practical insights to the participants about this important piece legislation. The last two sessions were delivered by Mr. Shailesh Gandhi, who briefed the participants about the RTI Act, its

recent amendment, judicial backlogs as well as the issue of privacy of citizens. He then focused on the drafting and filing of RTI Applications and guided the participants in drafting RTI Applications and framing their queries better.

The aforesaid training program therefore served as an ideal platform for students and professionals alike to understand the importance of good governance as well as legislations such as RTI and RTS that lead to accountability in governance. The Lead CAs and CAs also got exposed to the nuances of organizing an event, thus honing their leadership skills and strengthening the CA programme as a whole. To obtain certificates for the training program, each participant was required to file an RTI Application to ensure that they have not only understood the law, but also put the training to use by actually filing an RTI Application.



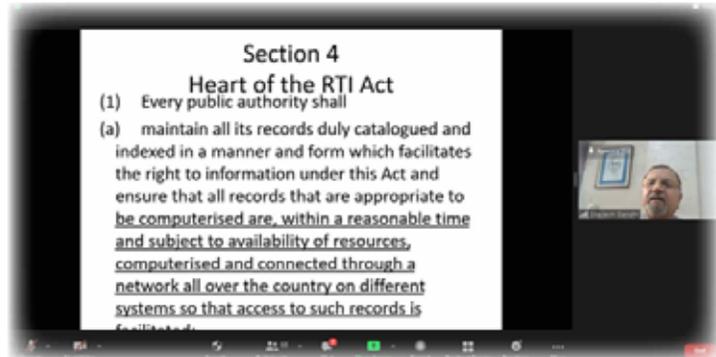
Mr. Raja delivering a session on "Demystifying Governance"



Mr. Ranga Rao explaining the salient features of the The Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015



Dr. Rashmi M. Oza delivering a session on "RTI and the Indian Constitution"



Mr. Shailesh Gandhi explaining Section 4 of the Right to Information Act, 2005

WEBINARS ORGANIZED BY PCGT

The following webinars / virtual sessions were organized by PCGT from January to March 2021, witnessing participation from students across the country:

Description of the Event	Date and Time of the Event	Speaker / Chief Guest
Webinar on Diluting Public Trust in Judicial System in the World's Largest Democracy - Pendency Crosses Four Crore Mark!	January 10, 2021 - 11 am to 1 pm	Hon'ble Justice Shri M. N. Venkatachaliah (Former Chief Justice of India)
Webinar on Virtual Courts for Efficient Justice Delivery	January 23, 2021 - 6 pm to 8 pm	Hon'ble Justice Shri B. N. Srikrishna (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India) and Hon'ble Justice Shri Rajiv Lochan Mehrotra (Former Judge, Allahabad High Court)
Webinar on Changing Dynamics of Bureaucracy in Democracy	February 1, 2021 - 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm	Mr. J. F. Ribeiro (Founding Trustee, PCGT) and Mr. V. P. Raja (Chairman, PCGT)
Webinar on Right to Information (RTI)	February 6, 2021 - 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm	Mr. Shailesh Gandhi (Former Central Information Commissioner)
Webinar on Right to Services (RTS)	February 11, 2021 - 5:30 pm to 7 pm	Mr. D. S. Ranga Rao (RTI Advisor, PCGT)
Virtual Session on Indian Polity and Governance	February 13, 2021 - 8 pm to 9 pm	Mr. Aditya Lele (Founder, Bharat Bhagya Vidhata)
Webinar on Importance of Leadership and Team Building in Civil Services	February 15, 2021 - 5 pm to 6:15 pm	Mr. V. P. Raja (Chairman, PCGT)
Webinar on Road Safety Awareness	February 17, 2021 - 4 pm to 5 pm	Mr. Mahesh Zagade (Ex-IAS)
Webinar on Youth and their Political Participation through Centuries	February 19, 2021 - 7 pm to 8 pm	Mr. Mahesh Zagade (Ex-IAS)
Virtual Session on Understanding the Budget Making Procedure	February 28, 2021 - 8 to 9 pm	Mr. Chinmay Bendre (Independent Policy Analyst)
Webinar on the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Courts to Address Huge Pendency of Court Cases	March 6, 2021 - 6 pm to 8:30 pm	Hon'ble Mr. Justice R. C. Chavan (Vice-Chairperson, Supreme Court e-Committee and Former Judge, Bombay High Court), Hon'ble Mr. Justice C. K. Thakkar (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India), Hon'ble Mr. Justice Kalpesh Jhaveri (Former Chief Justice, Odisha High Court), Hon'ble Mr. Justice Rajiv Lochan Mehrotra (Former Judge, Allahabad High Court), Hon'ble Mr. Justice Shiv Kumar Sharma (Former Judge, Rajasthan High Court)
Virtual Session on Importance of Press in a Parliamentary Democracy	March 14, 2020 - 8 pm to 9 pm	Mr. Sagar Menon (Founder, Citta)



Webinar on Diluting Public Trust in Judicial System in the World's Largest Democracy by Hon'ble Justice (Retd.) Shri M. N. Venkatachaliah



Mr. J. F. Ribeiro addressing the students on Changing Dynamics of Bureaucracy in Democracy

WEBINARS ORGANIZED BY PCGT



Hon'ble Mr. Justice (Retd.) C. K. Thakkar expressing his views on the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Courts to Address Huge Pendency of Court Cases



Mr. V. P. Raja talking about the Importance of Leadership and Team Building in Civil Services



Mr. Mahesh Zagade speaking on Road Safety Awareness



Webinar on Right to Information (RTI) by Mr. Shailesh Gandhi



Hon'ble Justice (Retd.) Shri B. N. Srikrishna and Hon'ble Justice (Retd.) Shri Rajiv Lochan Mehrotra sharing their insights on Virtual Courts for Efficient Justice Delivery



Virtual Session on Importance of Press in a Parliamentary Democracy by Mr. Sagar Menon (PCGT NYP Instagram Live)

POCSO

Safety of Women and Children Programme Report: January-March 2021

Events/projects in chronological order:

❑ January 2021:

1. Suggestions sent to Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on Shakti Criminal Bill 2020, which was to include several amendments in criminal laws in Maharashtra.
2. Installation of street lights in Antop Hill and Govandi under Nirbhaya, joint efforts of Aangan Trust and PCGT.
3. Sessions with interns, educating them about child protection laws in India and how they can train people about child safety (20 interns).

❑ February 2021:

1. Sessions with interns, educating them about child protection laws in India and how they can train people about child safety (14 interns).
2. Webinar with NSS Committee of NM College on Child Safety and Why we Need to Pay Attention Right Now'.

❑ March 2021:

1. Felicitation of Police Didis by Mr. Julio Ribeiro, Ms Aswathi Dorje, and Mr. Vishwas Nangare Patil on the occasion of International Women's Day.

2. Essay writing competition on International Women's Day for the age group of 12-16 years and 17-21 years on the topic of 'Women who Chose to Challenge' (14 Participants).
3. Teachers' Training Programme: Over 5,000 school teachers from about 2,000 schools in Mumbai were trained.
4. Sessions with interns, educating them about child protection laws in India and how they can train people about child safety (5 interns).

Highlights of the projects undertaken by PCGT:

● Felicitation of Police *Didis* on International Women's Day

With an intention to acknowledge the work being done under the Police Didi Programme which PCGT has been supporting since its initiation, we felicitated 15 Police Didis who were recommended by the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations), Mumbai. The felicitation was done by Mr. Julio Ribeiro, Mrs. Aswathi Dorje, Director of Maharashtra Police Academy, Nashik, and Mr. Vishwas Nangare Patil, Joint Commissioner of Police (Law & Order), Mumbai. During the programme we spoke about the good work that the awardee police officers have done to promote child

● Teachers' Training Programme

Last year PCGT had trained 300 school principals about child sexual abuse. This year, we took it one step ahead and conducted training of over 2,000 schools with the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai in partnership with Pratham NGO and Teach for India, making it the biggest project PCGT has successfully completed. The training included understanding child protection as per guidelines of the United Nations, child safety and the laws related to it (POCSO Act and Juvenile Justice Act) that the teachers should be aware of in order to not only protect their students against sexual offences in person but also online.

Our former and current interns were engaged in the team of Volunteers led by our former interns Ms Shreevidya Nargolkar, Ms Priyanshi Sharma, Ms Khushi Doshi, and Ms Nimrat Dhillon who assisted Advocate Sonali Shelar in enrolling the schools to participate and run this programme smoothly on Zoom.



Mr. Vishwas Nangare Patil, Joint Commissioner of Police (Law & Order), Mumbai



Mrs. Aswathi Dorje, Director of Maharashtra Police Academy, Nashik



safety in schools and even *chawls* and slum areas throughout the pandemic when the schools were closed.

POCSO

PCGT is now planning on connecting these schools to the Police Stations and Child Protection Committees that function on ward level to create a sustainable system under which regular meetings and educational sessions on child safety will be taken with students as well as their parents.

Shakti Criminal Bill, 2020 which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. The two Bills proposed stricter punishments up to death penalty for heinous crimes against women and children; among other things, it also proposed a regressive definition of consent.

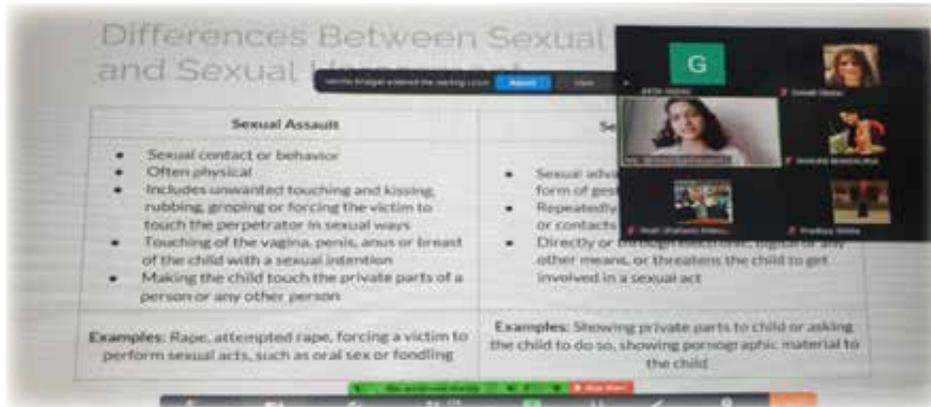
Sonali Shelar who was assisted by former interns Ms Amisha Upadhyay, Ms Priyanshi Sharma, Ms Hari Priya, and Ms Shriya Waman.

- **Street Illumination Project**

As you are aware, PCGT, along with Aangan Trust, has been trying to get the installation of street-lights done in 15 identified hotspots that are vulnerable to sexual harassment. This time our combined efforts have resulted in the successful installation of street lights in Antop Hill and Govandi under the Nirbhaya Fund.

- **Engagement of Youth**

Advocate Shelar speaks to our interns on a regular basis and trains them to understand the POCSO Act in a way that they can educate other people around them about it. Since the imposition of lockdown, she has trained all the online interns (approximately 90) and is in regular touch with 40 of them who keep coming back to PCGT and assist her in the projects and researches.



- **Shakti Criminal Bill, 2020**

The Maharashtra Government proposed several amendments to the law pertaining to sexual offences against women and children under the

PCGT wrote suggestions to the Legislative Assembly noting down its opinions highlighting various researches and judgements. The suggestions were drafted by Advocate

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

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.

Visit us at : www.pcgt.org



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