Your garbage today can be his garden tomorrow
Solid Waste Management

In a recent study conducted by Asiaweek, Mumbai stood at the very bottom of a list of 40 Asian cities on quality of life measures. Clean environments were a prime consideration. The city does in fact face a quiet emergency in this sphere, especially with the garbage it generates. This adds up to a colossal over 5,000 tonnes every day. Four dumping sites will be able to take no more in the next 5 to 7 years. The city will have to "reduce, recycle, re-use" solid waste or confront an emergency that is no longer quiet.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) responsible for the city’s solid waste management, employs 28,000 ‘Safai Karamcharis’ and spends Rs. 220 crores annually. Some 261 municipal vehicles and a large number of private vehicles are used to transport the waste making an average of almost 1112 trips per day (NEERI report.

The task of maintaining a city the size of Mumbai, particularly, with regard to overall cleanliness, is awesome to say least. The problems of solid waste management in the city, though enormous, are not beyond solution.

A single individual can contribute either to the creation of garbage by senselessly littering the streets, or to its elimination by exercising care and restraint. The city-sized crisis, therefore, can be resolved through individual actions at institutional, state and citizen levels, provided a high degree of understanding and motivation exists among the people.

BOMBAY FIRST, and its Solid Waste Management Committee, has made a modest contribution towards creating public awareness and involvement in solving this monumental problem. Much more needs to be done.

Keshub Mahindra

W. J. N. Danait
Chief Executive: Bombay First
Almost two thirds of the sanctioned budget is spent on staff salaries and transport. However, citizen and media protest give evidence of a job poorly done, on the whole.

Very recently, strenuous efforts by Municipal Commissioner Girish Gokhale and Additional Municipal Commissioner Ratnakar Gaikwad have effected some noticeable improvements, including a successful "Zero Garbage" campaign on August 15, 1997 Independence Day. But this does not amount to a sustainable effort of sufficient scale. In the end, it is the BMC that must discharge its responsibility. On the other hand, citizens cannot wait with folded arms for this to happen. Bombay First has set up a Solid Waste Management Committee to help mobilize citizen involvement in this vital task as well as to facilitate participation in it of business, voluntary organizations, educational institutions and the media.

The Role Of Bombay First In Solid Waste Management

The Solid Waste Management Committee is chaired by Mr. Keshub Mahindra. It was set up to make actionable proposals to help resolve solid waste management problems in the city in partnership with the BMC, NGOs and relevant businesses. The committee means to identify bottlenecks, network among concerned citizens and NGOs, and liaise with the BMC.

It seeks to address all stakeholders (especially house holders) on the critical issue of segregation of waste and mobilize ragpickers when necessary. The Bombay First SWM Committee plans to promote the three 'R' approach that is Reduce, Reuse, Recycle to whatever is presently untreated and thrown away as waste.

The First Step

The first step and real answer to the existing problem lies in separating the contents of the waste into recyclables and the biodegradable components at source, be it the household, hospital, restaurant or hostel. It is important for people to realize how harmful unsegregated waste can be.

Organic waste when dumped along with the recyclable component of waste decomposes and causes an obnoxious stink as the recyclables thrown into dumping sites are not only incapable of being biodegraded, but also inhibit the natural biodegradation of organic waste. The decomposition of mixed waste generates gases like methane, carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulphide which affect not only those living in the vicinity, but also people living in distant areas where these harmful gases move and settle dictated by the wind direction. Untreated organic waste decomposes into nitrates which attract mosquitoes increasing the malaria and dengue risk in the city.

The ragpickers play a crucial role in their own silent way - separating recyclable matter from the solid waste. There is an urgent need to recognize the role of the ragpickers, encourage them by incorporating them into the SWM programmes, thereby also ensuring they earn a decent livelihood and take their rightful place in society.

Solid waste management, to be effective, needs the involvement of every one, at all levels - the householder, domestic help, the ragpicker, the jamadar, private business, NGOs, educational institutions and the BMC.

One Good Answer – Vermiculture

There is a great need to disseminate information about the link between the organic matter and the soil, particularly among urbanites, who are quite cut off from nature. Amongst various processes for tackling organic waste, the vermiculture biotechnology has been found to be the most effective and efficient one. Biodegradables which are mainly food and vegetable remnants need to go back to the soil in a form that enriches the soil. The humble earthworm is the hero of this operation. Earthworms are mixed in with the compost and by their constant movements to and fro, they turn the soil around and the organic waste turns into a fertile field. Vermiculture can be practiced by individuals, as also large organizations. It's not only the most efficient system, but it also puts other recyclable items in their proper channel for further use.

The two main Bombay First initiatives that have emerged in the area of Solid Waste Management are the "Clean-Up Churchgate" pilot project and the 'Safe Disposal of Medical Waste' initiative.
The Clean-Up Churchgate Project

The Clean-Up Churchgate project has been initiated with the participation of various resident groups of the Churchgate area and Ms. Kunti Oza of Clean Mumbai Foundation. This group works closely with the BMC A ward office.

The groups are:


2. Oval and Cooperage Residents Association.

3. Maharishi Karve Road Residents Association.


Churchgate was chosen as the project area as it serves as the nodal point for 15 lakh persons who commute to and from their work places. By virtue of its location, the project can have a powerful demonstration effect. As people actually experience the results of this pilot project, they might be motivated to effect similar ventures in their own localities.

The project comprises various components like a second cleaning of the area by a private contractor, the monitoring and training of hawkers, promoting awareness generation on waste management and encouraging the residents to follow segregation of waste practices. Bombay First has provided seed capital of Rs. 3 lakhs for waste bins, media boards, and salaries for the second cleaning. The project is monitored and implemented by the residents themselves. Regular review meetings are held with Bombay First and action plans jointly created.

The project also seeks to involve college students and business establishments in the vicinity to create a core structure that will sustain the project over the coming years.
People Worth Emulating

Meet some of the Mumbaitees who have taken the initiative to keep their surroundings clean and green:

Viren Merchant, a young chartered accountant, pioneered a project called Svalambi, at Joshi Lane in Ghatkopar. Today this small residential area is the focal point of great interest, attracting citizens, civic officials and even industrialists. Says Viren: "We started the work on a small scale by collecting Re.1 from each household, to employ a round-the-clock sweeper. All the biodegradable garbage is separated at every household. Over 700 plants are kept on the roads. The vermiculuture provides manure for these flowers and greenery. The municipal staff does not even have to collect the garbage!"

Neena Sawhney, a resident of Mahalakshmi in South Mumbai, got together the housewives in her Cooperative Society to set up a vermiculuture facility. The manure resulting from the vermiculuture is used only in the big common garden, but also given to individual home owners who keep potted plants. Ms. Sawhney is most enthusiastic about her project. She visits schools and invites children to see vermiculuture at work. Neighbouring Societies have also taken up vermiculuture. In Neena's view: "Vermiculuture should ideally be used where the quantity of waste is within a certain limit."

Dr. Ramesh Doshi has a doctorate in agricultural economics. After retirement, he got interested in organics farming and biodegradation processes.

He started by using his kitchen waste as manure for his terrace garden. The effect was startling. Fruit trees started yielding fruit within two years instead of the normal 5 to 7! Dr. Doshi's experiment has encouraged many others to follow suit - one more step towards returning organic waste to nature.

Kisan Mehta, President of the Save Bombay Committee, has pioneered an Advanced Locality Management (ALM) scheme, to spread the awareness of a clean and green Mumbai.

For a locality to come under ALM, it would have to fulfill certain criteria:

1. Imposition of self-discipline.
2. Every locality (limited to one lane or one slum) should have a representative of their 'locality committee'.
3. A meeting would be held every month of all the members of the committee to discuss the problems of the locality vis-a-vis the BMC.
4. Every building/chawl should have a common garbage collection bin within their compound. Every household should maintain two bins to hold dry-recyclable and wet organic matter separately.
5. The residents of the locality should segregate paper/plastic/metal and divert it to ragpickers or their building sweeper for sale. The locality should adopt vermiculture.
6. The resident generating debris is responsible for clearing it through private contractors and should not dump it on the road.

Vermiculuture creates a beautiful bageecha for this building!
Joint Core Group: Government Of Maharashtra And Bombay First

Bombay First representatives led by the Chairman - Mr. Ashok Advani, Mr. Gerson da Cunha, CEO, Mr. W J N Danait the incoming CEO and the Chairmen and Convenors of different expert Committees met with the Chief Secretary, Mr. Dinesh Afzulpurkar and other key state Government officials (in all 22 Secretaries and senior state government officials attended) at Bombay Gymkhana on 28th July, 1997. Presentations were made by committee convenors on priority problems and emerging opportunities in Mumbai City. The Chief Secretary and other Secretaries proposed the setting up of a formal collaborative mechanism to carry forward the various proposals of the Bombay First Committees. The Chief Secretary expressed his support to the Bombay First initiatives and suggested that specific areas be identified wherein action can be initiated jointly with the government.

The immediate positive outcome of this meeting was the setting up of a Joint Core Group headed by the Chief Secretary, comprising senior, key, officials of the Government of Maharashtra and Bombay First representatives, with specific terms of reference. The first meeting of the group was held on August 25, 1997 during which the subjects discussed were:

1. Modifications in Development Control Regulations for Greater Mumbai with a view to removing the existing impediments in the way of investment and growth of the services sector and facilitating construction of modern hi-tech office premises with up-to-date communications and I.T. facilities. A small and compact Working Group has been constituted, chaired by Mr. D T Joseph, Managing Director, SICOM, to study the existing D.C. regulations and suggest suitable recommendations. Bombay First has nominated its representative on the Group. The Group has made considerable headway during the last 2 months, studying the various regulations in depth and framing proposals for amendment to DC regulations relating to augmentation of supply of office premises in the island city, parking facilities, setting up of good quality educational institutions, hospitals, recreational/ sports activities, etc.

The proposed amendments are expected to be submitted shortly to the state government for its consideration.

2. Modifications in MMRDA’s policy of disposal of land in Bandra/ Kurla Complex. Presently, MMRDA plans to develop an international financial centre in BKC and the land is accordingly disposed off to national and international financial institutions. It has been proposed by Bombay First
that the land disposal policy should permit much more diversified uses so that besides financial institutions, other business organisations are made eligible to buy land or secure rental premises, for such use as head offices of MNCs and other business houses, and offices of other large commercial and service organisations.

3. Setting up a Metropolitan Data Network for the Financial Services sector. Telecommunications Committee of Bombay First has prepared a report recommending the setting up of a high volume closed user data network for the financial services sector. At present, besides the National Stock Exchange, no other organisation/institution is using data communications effectively. Present rules also do not permit interaction of network of one user group with that of another. It was decided that the telecommunications Committee would coordinate with the Managing Director of SICOM and Secretary (Industries), Government of Maharashtra for securing the involvement of the Government of Maharashtra in this venture.

4. Implementation of MUTP II which aims at improving Mumbai's transport infrastructure to be able to cope with the massive growth in population and economic activities in the city. The matter was discussed in the Core Group when the Chief Secretary informed that an agreement has been reached with Indian Railways on the setting up of a Mumbai Railway Development Corporation, a joint venture between the Railways and the GOM. This Corporation will primarily be responsible for implementing the railway component of the MUTP II project, which includes quadrupling of tracks, new link lines, additional rakes etc. A separate Corporation, to be known as Urban Rehabilitation Corporation Of Mumbai (URCOM), is being set up for rehabilitation of households affected by MUTP II projects.

While the volume of medical waste estimated at about 40 tons a day appears negligible against over 5000 tons of solid waste generated daily in Mumbai, the threat to health is out of all proportion to the actual tonnage. Improper waste handling and disposal cause transmission of the HIV virus that leads to AIDS, Hepatitis B & C and the more familiar types of infection like typhoid and dysentery. Diseases are often caused through injury sustained from syringe needles and other sharp instruments contaminated with infected human blood.

Currently, hospital wastes are not segregated and get mixed with general municipal garbage. Hospitals themselves show lack of will to address the problem. The groups most at risk are health care workers, municipal waste management workers and slum dwellers, particularly ragpickers. However, the practice of recycling disposable needles, places the whole city at risk.

Bombay First, with the BMC and Tata Memorial Hospital, sponsored a workshop on "Safe Disposal of Hospital Waste". Prof. Soli Ariccivala of Bombay First and Dr. K.A. Dinshaw, Director of Tata Memorial Hospital, organized the gathering, which was also addressed by Mr. Ratnakar Gaikwad, Additional Municipal Commissioner, BMC, Dr. Rohini Kelkar of Tata Memorial, and Dr. Alka Karande, Executive Health Officer, BMC.

A panel discussion was conducted on "Preferred Options for Segregation, Treatment, and Disposal". It concluded with proposals for designing a model half day training programme for hospital workers, NGO assistance to ragpickers and assessment of the potential for private commercial operations to complement the BMC's efforts.

The proceedings of the workshop have been published by the BMC. A Steering Committee has been formed, chaired by Mr. Gaikwad to carry forward the main conclusions of the workshop. The committee is currently studying a pilot project for the safe disposal of "sharps" like needles and other sharp instruments.
Transport In Mumbai - Going Nowhere?

Present Scenario

Years ago, planners foresaw the need to upgrade the existing transportation system. Several studies in the past recommended a variety of transport schemes. However, most of the proposed projects, especially those that were capital-intensive by nature could not be implemented, mainly due to lack of funds. For instance, the construction of a road network comprising high speed roads passing through the city.

In A Jam

Delays such as these, in constructing much needed transport projects have started taking a toll on the city. For example, the rise in congestion levels is the result of a growing number of private vehicles coupled with a poor public transport system. Congestion has lowered bus speeds to 12-14 kph, actual operating speeds being even lower in some cases. Suburban trains with nine-car rakes carry over 4500 passengers during peak hours, when the optimum capacity is around 2600 passengers. The number of casualties in Mumbai rise with each passing year – around 700 deaths due to train accidents, and over 25000 injuries to one’s person, including 340 fatal road accidents.

The pollution load in Mumbai has now reached a level of 30 tons per hour. The deterioration in the transport system cannot be arrested, unless transport projects are implemented on a priority basis.

Let's Heed The Warning

The traffic situation will certainly worsen if the warnings of transport planners are ignored. According to a study completed by the Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) in 1983, demand for mass transportation (bus and rail) will constitute about 80 per cent of the total demand in 2001.

The number of daily passenger trips will rise from 7 million in 1979 to 15 million in 2001 - a virtual doubling of trips over a 20-year period.

As overcrowding continues in buses and trains, Mumbaikars will be tempted to purchase their own vehicles, thereby adding to the congestion on roads. By mid 1997, over 250 vehicles were being added to Mumbai’s traffic every day. Although the number of passengers travelling in buses and trains during peak hours will rise from 1.90 million in 1993 to over 2.75 million in 2011, the actual percentage of public transport passengers will drop from 88 per cent to 85 per cent. These traffic forecasts suggest that the city is heading towards a transport disaster and urgent remedial measures are required.

Improving The Railway System

The main skeleton of the rail network in Mumbai was laid down over 100 years ago and it continues to be the backbone of the city's transport system. This is evident from the fact that, although buses and trains carry almost an equal number of passengers (over five million) every day, the amount of daily passenger kilometres operated by the rail services is four times that operated by bus services. Thus, the traffic forecast also indicates that the demand for travel by public transport will increase by about 46 per cent, with the demand for rail travel increasing more than that for bus travel. The suburban railway will not be able to cope with this situation unless the present trend of inadequate rail infrastructure and rolling stock investments changes.

Several advantages will accrue from an improvement in Mumbai's suburban railway system. The most obvious would be the low cost of railway operation. In 1993, the cost per passenger kilometre by rail was found to be 28 percent of the cost by bus. There are, therefore, substantial economies to be achieved by optimising rail services.

If suburban rail services are improved by the year 2011, traffic may reduce considerably. Using a comprehensive traffic model, it was found that, with appropriate rail investment strategies, peak hour traffic in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) can reduce by nearly
14 percent by 2011. In the suburbs, this reduction will be around 16 percent, while in the region outside Greater Mumbai, the maximum level of reduction will be about 44 percent.

Such a drastic reduction in traffic would reduce environmental pollution. In fact, the impact of such an improvement on the environment would be dramatic. The 1993 total pollution load of 30 tons per peak hour will rise to a maximum level of 50 tons per peak hour in 2011, amounting to a rise of over 78 percent. However, with an improvement in the suburban railway system, the percentage rise in pollution will be contained to a maximum level of 60 percent.

**Upgrading The Transport Network**

The focus of future upgrading of Mumbai's transport network will have to be on the suburban railways with buses forming another supporting public transport system. In fact, it was with this principle as the central theme, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) processed the requirements of the proposed World Bank-aided project for Mumbai. It included a total package of Rs.35000 million (at 1996 prices), including the cost of upgrading the suburban railways at Rs.25000 million, and Rs.10000 million for non-rail and road improvements. The major projects included in this package were as follows.

**Rail Projects**
- Quadrupling tracks between Borivali and Virar
- Andheri-Goregaon or 6th line Mumbai Central to Borivali
- Bandra-Kurla new link
- Kurla-Thane lines
- Other improvements on the Central and Western Railways
- Purchasing new rakes

**Non Rail Projects**
- Anik-Panjarpol link Road
- Jogeshwari-Vikhroli Link Road
- Western Relief Road
- Thane-Ghodbunder Road

- Road over bridges at Jogeshwari, Dahisar, Nalasopara, Ulhasnagar, Badlapur and Katali.
- Pedestrian subways at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) and Adelphi.
- Area Traffic Control for daily traffic monitoring and management.
- Purchase of new bus fleet.

The prioritisation of these schemes and their prompt implementation has become urgent.

**Commuter Rail Polygon**

The days of merely optimising the existing rail network are already over. The future requirement of mobility for making Mumbai a successful International Financial Centre
will force the planners and administrators of the city to evolve the most powerful Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) System for the entire metropolitan region.

After taking into consideration some of the past and on-going schemes, the Commuter Rail Polygon appears to be the most appropriate skeleton around which the MRT System of 21st Century Mumbai should be developed (See Figure 1). It is along the line of thinking of MMRDA's poly-nucleated or multigrowth centre development strategy for the region.

The Commuter Rail Polygon would connect the following growth centres:

- Central Business District (CBD) in South Mumbai (Colaba, Nariman Point and Fort)
- Bandra-Kurla Complex
- Vashi (Industrial belt, wholesale market)
- CBD, Navi Mumbai (Belapur)
- Dronagiri Node (Jawaharlal Nehru Port)

Such a transit system would require a tunnel under the sea for the Southern Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), an ambitious crossing currently under consideration. It would also demand the strengthening of the North-South Rail network of the island by constructing the Seventh Rail Corridor (Colaba to Kurla via Churchgate, CST, Mahalaxmi and Bandra).

The Commuter Rail Polygon when commissioned will offer tremendous mobility to the large population living in the metropolis. This would result in a sharp rise in regional productivity and would bring the city of Mumbai closer to the realisation of its dream of becoming a powerful International Financial Centre in South Asia.

Let's Act – Now!

In order to expedite implementation of proposed railway projects, and operate the suburban railway efficiently, the railway organisational issues are becoming increasingly important. A proposal to set up Mumbai Railway Development Corporation (MRDC) is under consideration by the State Government and Indian Railways (IR). The main objective of forming MRDC is to ensure adequate funding and prompt implementation for proposed improvements. The format of new railway organisation for suburban railways will soon be ready.

But this organisational structure will not prove adequate for implementing new railway schemes. There is therefore, another proposal to form a separate autonomous corporation for constructing as well as operating future segregated railway system for Mumbai. This organisation will be developed on principles similar to those of the Konkan Railway. It will become the body which will be accountable for planning, funding and managing Mumbai's Mass Rapid Transit System - the real Champion for future railways.

The delays in implementing road and railway improvement schemes, and in deciding the format of the new railway organisation, have led to substantial escalation in the costs. Meanwhile, Mumbai's passengers are becoming impatient, and have started agitating. Incidents of trains being stopped, and railway property being destroyed have become common, cautioning the need for action to prevent Mumbai heading towards a transport disaster.

![Image](In the suburban railway there are more sleepers in the train, than under it!)
Where city finances have been unable to match city needs in the United States, Business Improvement Districts have proliferated. In New York, for instance, they have changed the face of many previously run-down areas. The city, notoriously strapped for funds, now has 34 BIDs in a wide variety of neighbourhoods.

In essence, BIDs are private not-for-profit organizations entitled to levy a rate on all commercial property owners within a specified area to provide a range of services. They are established under city legislation and levy an agreed rate within their district. All contributions to a BID have shareholder rights as to the services provided from revenue raised through an assessment.

**Some Important Characteristics Of BIDs**

- The most important feature is the use of a compulsory levy.
- The funding base once established is managed by a not-for-profit organization or 'BID team'.
- All property owners have a vote in the management of the BID and the services it provides.
- They encourage enlightened self-interest to flourish and further enhance public-private partnerships.
- BIDs provide services that are purely additional to those of existing public authorities.
- Most of the BIDs in New York have focused their services around the concept of "clean and safe".
- By investing in additional services to their local environments, owners benefit their property which can ultimately be recouped as a tangible increase in property values.

There are now 1500 BIDs in the United States. BIDs range from organisations with annual budgets of over $5 million to small ones budgeting $75,000 or less. Services include additional street cleaning and maintenance, removal of posters and cleaning of walls, security, beautification and promotional campaigns. BIDs differ widely in style. The Grand Central Station BID is a high profile business approach, while the neighbouring Times Square BID is more community orientated.

**BIDs are a highly flexible mechanism for improving parts of cities without the city or state having to take action. The driving force behind BIDs is a rational economic decision by private sector property owners and business.**

**Are BIDs Relevant To Mumbai?**

During a recent visit to Mumbai, Ms Judith Mayhew, Chairman, Planning & Resources Committee of the Corporation of London, spoke of a BID getting under way in her city after a study undertaken in New York.
by specialists of the London School of Economics. Research indicates that BIDs already operate with considerable success in New York, a city which has much in common with Mumbai. The time may have come to adapt this concept to tackle urban issues in Mumbai.

BIDs are not a panacea. They can only deal with symptoms rather than causes. They could never tackle the wider social, political, and cultural problems in Mumbai. Other policies are required for such large scale efforts. But BIDs do seem to offer a solution to more modest problems such as how to find additional funding for city revival in the business areas and self-help in smaller residential neighbourhoods and for fostering local partnerships.

Though on a voluntary basis such partnerships already exist in Mumbai, BIDs offer the possibility of putting these partnerships on a more secure footing. The Bombay First 'Clean-Up' Churchgate initiative for instance could be a potential BID, depending on the extent of financial and other involvement by private enterprise in the project area. Joshi Lane in Ghatkopar is an example of self help and community oriented approach to area improvement.

The applicability of BIDs in Mumbai should be seriously examined by policy makers, local government, private enterprise and citizen groups. The main issues might be the question of how far the private sector in Mumbai would be willing or able to become involved in BIDs and what kind of legislation would be needed to set them up.

Bombay First would like to invite our readers' views on the legal, financial, and social implications of establishing BIDs in Mumbai. We look forward to hearing from you and your feedback will be published in our next issue.

Bombay First Has A New Chairman

Mr. V.S. Palekar past President of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry took over as Chairman of the Bombay City Policy Research Foundation and Bombay First from Mr. Ashok Advani, Chairman, Blue Star Limited with effect from September 24, 1997.

Mr. Palekar is the former Chairman and Managing Director of Johnson and Johnson Limited, where he had worked in a number of capacities for 37 years. He is a Chartered Accountant by profession and has been associated with a number of professional and commercial organizations.

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Relax Rent Control In Mumbai
- by D. M. Sukhthankar

Bombay First made a presentation on 11th September, 1997 before the Joint Committee of the two Houses of the Maharashtra Legislature on the Maharashtra Rent Control Bill, 1993 which is awaiting finalization by the Committee.

The broad context in which the presentation was made was three-fold:

- Urgency of dismantling Rent Control which is obviously alien to the new policy of economic liberalization and globalization, reinforcement of competitive environment and transformation of a controlled and regulated economy into a free market economy.

- The experience of neighbouring countries/cities like Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta etc. where the freely operating real estate and rental market has responded best to the emerging demand for residential housing and office and commercial space and

- Flight of business and industry away from Mumbai owing to the prevalence of very high rentals as well as real estate prices in the metropolis. (Fig 1)

The following were the main proposals and recommendations put forward on behalf of Bombay First for acceptance by the Committee and their incorporation in the new Rent Control Bill:

- Exempting from Rent Control for a period of 15 - 20 years contracts for letting out new constructions as well as existing residential and commercial flats/tenements which have not been let out for a continuous period of one year. In this context, it was pointed out that the census of 1991 had revealed that over 400,000 such units were just lying vacant and

- Recognising the transaction of payment and acceptance of any consideration while transferring tenancies and while creating new tenancies as legally valid. This is absolutely necessary for rooting out the existing malpractices, extortion and generation of black money, with all its attendant evils, besides generating additional revenue for the State Government in the form of stamp duty.

- Revising, in suitable stages, the existing levels of rents so as to bring them in tune with the current level of costs of repairs and maintenance, which would also result in augmentation of revenue from property taxes for the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai.

In our presentation, it was emphasized that Rent Control has resulted in neglect of periodical repairs and
maintenance of tenanted buildings and a continuous increase in the number of aging tenanted buildings becoming dilapidated and prone to sudden collapse. It was also emphasized that Rent Control has resulted in flagrant distortion and inequity in the burden on account of property taxes on old tenanted buildings mainly situated in the island city of Mumbai which are subject to Rent Control at present and the new buildings coming up in the suburbs and peripheral areas of the city. To illustrate, a tenant of a two-room rented unit of approximately 200 sq.ft. situated, say, in Girgaon area, pays by way of property taxes and repair cess a paltry amount of less than Rs.1000 per year. A recently built 200 sq.ft. tenement in Charkop area in the distant suburbs of Kandivli pays merely by way of property taxes approx. Rs.4300/- every year and, in addition, water charges as per the water meter. Rent Control has thus resulted in the creation of a privileged class of vested interests. The younger generation born in Mumbai are, in the absence of availability of rental housing, thus driven to take shelter on footpaths, streets and in slums. Reform of the Rent Control law alone can provide a ray of hope to the younger generation of being able to secure rental shelter, sooner than later.

**Landmark Judgement On Bombay Rent Act**

In a judgement delivered last month, the Supreme Court has ruled as follows:

- No further extension to Bombay Rent Act beyond March 31, 1998.
- Provisions relating to protection against eviction of tenants remain unchanged.

- Standard rent fixation based on a reasonable return on investment and periodic revision keeping in view the erosion in real value of rents.

**THIS MAY BE THE WORLD YOUR CHILDREN WILL INHERIT**

To change it, all you need is the will. The will to plant more trees. To save the existing ones. To nurture NATURE. Let's do it. Starting today.

If we don't save the environment, who will?

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