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3rd Floor, Y.B. Chavan Centre, Gen. Jagannath Bhosale Marg, Next to Sachivalaya Gymkhana,
Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400021, India

☎ 22810070 ✉ info@mumbaifirst.org 🌐 www.mumbaifirst.org

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FIRST & FOREMOST

Preface

Dear Readers,

Happy New Year, and welcome to the January 2025 edition of the Mumbai First Newsletter, "First & Foremost"!

As we enter a new year, we reflect on an eventful last quarter of 2024, which showcased a series of impactful initiatives and thought-provoking discussions to shape a brighter future for our city. This issue highlights these activities, offering a glimpse into the work addressing Mumbai's pressing challenges and opportunities.

The **Mumbai Sustainability Forum** continued to lead the charge in fostering sustainable practices, with new projects and community-driven solutions addressing climate resilience and urban sustainability. We are proud to share updates on these initiatives and their growing impact.

Our **Political Townhall** provided a unique platform for citizens to engage directly with policymakers, sparking conversations on critical urban governance issues and driving actionable solutions.

The **Webinar: Fresh Perspectives on Air Pollution – Policies and Actions** brought together leading experts to tackle one of Mumbai's most urgent environmental concerns. Through this session, participants explored innovative approaches to improving air quality and creating healthier urban environments.

A **meeting with the US Consulate** underscored the importance of global partnerships, focusing on collaboration in urban development, sustainability, and community initiatives. This dialogue further strengthened Mumbai First's commitment to fostering international cooperation for local impact.

Finally, our recent blog article, "The Cost of Ignoring the Margins in Mumbai," sheds light on the vital need for inclusive urban policies. This thought-provoking piece highlights the often-overlooked realities of marginalized communities and emphasizes the importance of equity in urban development.

As always, we invite you to share your thoughts and ideas. Your insights help us refine our initiatives and ensure we continue building a Mumbai that is inclusive, resilient, and forward-thinking. We hope this edition inspires you to engage, participate, and contribute to our collective mission.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable journey.

Mumbai First Team



Events



Mumbai Sustainability Forum 2024 – IGBC Workshop, 26th September at IMC



Mumbai First, in collaboration with the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), hosted the **IGBC Green Residential Societies (GRS) Guidelines Workshop** at Walchand Hall, IMC, Churchgate on September 26th, 2024. This engaging session, part of the Mumbai Sustainability Forum, focused on inspiring residential societies to adopt sustainable practices for a greener, healthier Mumbai.





The workshop featured keynote addresses by sustainability experts, highlighting challenges such as water shortages and waste management and the pivotal role of housing societies in addressing these issues. Notable speakers included Shri Nitin Kale, District Deputy Registrar for Cooperative Societies, and Dr. Mala Singh, Chairperson of IGBC, who shared insights on sustainable urban development.

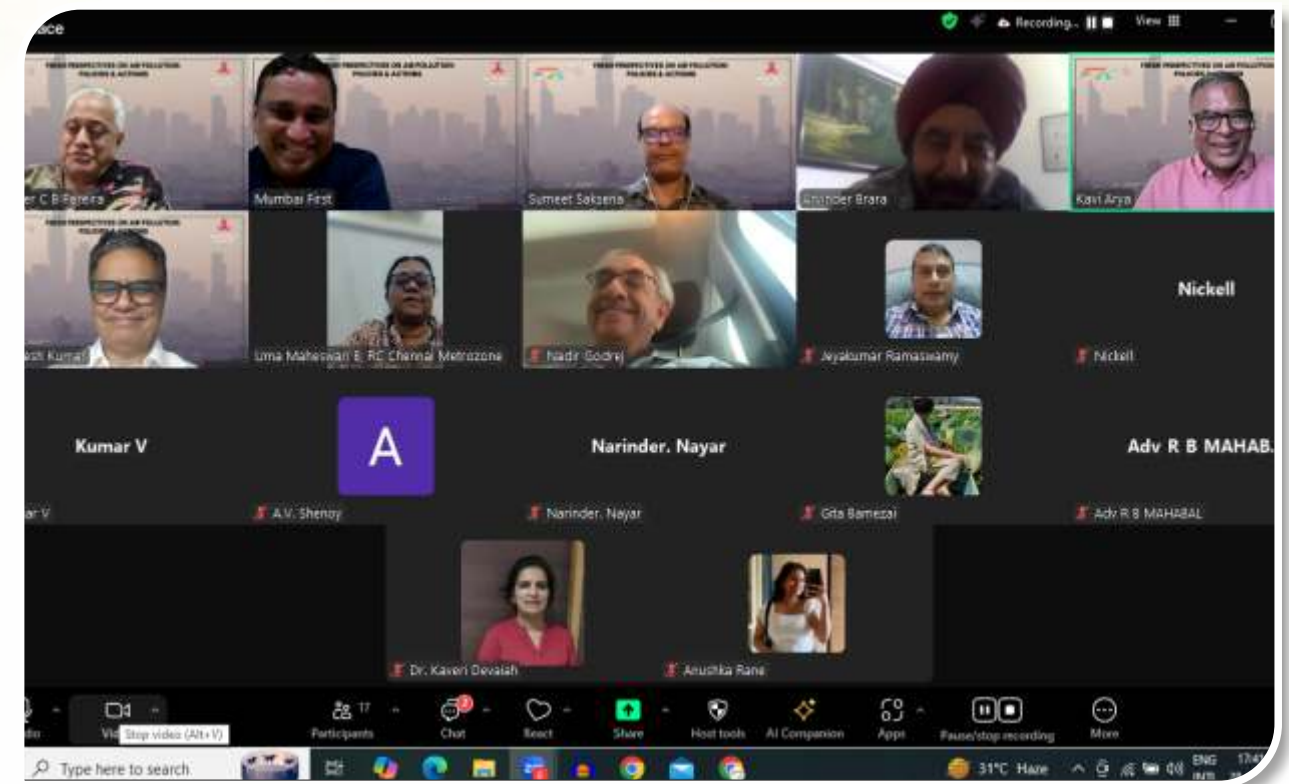
The unveiling of the Mumbai Sustainability Forum (MSF) logo marked a key milestone in Mumbai's green journey. Participants pledged to embrace sustainable living, and the session concluded with an interactive Q&A, followed by closing remarks from Dr. Kavi Arya, IIT-Mumbai professor, and Mumbai First board member.



Events



Webinar: Fresh Perspectives on Air Pollution - Policies & Actions, 28 October 2024



Mumbai First hosted a webinar on **tackling air pollution**, featuring insights from Dr. Sumeet Saksena (Senior Fellow, East-West Center, Hawaii) and Dr. Rakesh Kumar (Former Director, CSIR-NEERI), moderated by Dr. Kavi Arya (Professor, IIT-Bombay).

The session explored innovative strategies and practical approaches to combatting air pollution, emphasizing policy-driven solutions, community involvement, and technology-based interventions.

Key takeaways included:

1. The importance of robust air quality monitoring systems,
2. The role of green infrastructure, and
3. Fostering public-private partnerships to create cleaner, healthier urban environments.

Mumbai Political Town Hall – Whose Vision Will Shape Mumbai’s Future? – 11th November 2024 at IMC



Mumbai First organized a highly engaging **political town hall** on November 11, 2024, at Babubhai Chinai Hall, IMC, Churchgate. The event featured prominent leaders, **Shri. Milind Deora** representing the Mahayuti and **Shri. Aaditya Thackeray** from the Maha Vikas Aghadi, coming together to share their visions for Mumbai’s future.

With Mumbai’s growth plans at the core, the townhall delved into critical issues such as **infrastructure development, economic growth, environmental sustainability, and urban governance**. Both leaders presented their strategies to address the city's most pressing challenges, including improving public transport, tackling air pollution, and boosting Mumbai's global competitiveness as a financial hub.



The highlight of the event was the **interactive session**, where citizens actively engaged with the leaders, voicing their concerns and seeking clarifications. The discussions fostered constructive dialogue, enabling the identification of **focused and actionable solutions** to drive sustainable and inclusive development for Mumbai.

This townhall served as a valuable platform to bridge the gap between policymakers and citizens, reinforcing Mumbai First’s commitment to fostering participatory governance and shaping a resilient future for the city.



Events

US Consulate Meeting – 19th November at US Consulate Office, BKC

On November 19, 2024, Mumbai First reconnected with the US Consulate at their office in BKC to explore opportunities for collaboration. The meeting focused on Mumbai First's key areas of **sustainability and clean energy**, with the **Executive Board** presenting the organization's ongoing initiatives and upcoming projects.

Key attendees included **Mr. Rob Anderson, Mr. Andrew Caruso**, and their team, pledged support for Mumbai First upcoming Global Conference in February 2025, and facilitated connections with the New York Mayor's Office. Both parties agreed on the importance of periodic meetings to deepen collaboration and drive impactful outcomes for Mumbai.

This partnership marks another step toward building international alliances to advance sustainable development in the city.

Mumbai Speaks

The Cost of Ignoring the Margins in Mumbai

Why Climate Adaptation Must Prioritize Mumbai's Vulnerable

Ms. Anjali Saini, Research Intern, Mumbai First



Mumbai, a bustling city sprawled in 603.4 sq kilometres has mirrored some of the most harsh contrasts of life. Mumbai strikes a strong irony in every aspect of life. On one side, tall skyscrapers reflect rampant economic development; on the other, highly populated slums bring out the socio-economic vulnerabilities in the city. While Mumbai faces the brunt of climate change, it is the slums which are, home to almost half the population, continue to bear the maximum risks. Adaptation strategies for climate change that fail to protect

these marginalized groups substantially increase social inequity, increase economic costs, and lead to long-term environmental degradation. Are we pensive about these issues or will Mumbai continue to treat the vulnerable with utter uncertainty?

Vulnerability of the Slum Dwellers

According to a study conducted by UNICEF India and BMJ, Nearly four out of ten households in Mumbai's urban slums are vulnerable to health issues, and most of the households are vulnerable in their social, occupational, and residential spheres. The prevalence of poor sanitation and hygiene was critical, and overcrowding and inadequate ventilation were almost universal. Do they deserve to bear the worst consequences of a calamity they are not a part of generating? Poorly built homes collapse and streets become rivers during the monsoon rains, increasing the danger of waterborne illnesses and other health problems. The July 2005 flood in Mumbai, which uprooted thousands of slum dwellers and claimed about 1,100 lives, showed how susceptible

these areas are to even mild flooding. Climate change exacerbates these issues by heightening the effects of climatic events on already vulnerable lives. For slum dwellers, the absence of proper infrastructure and restricted access to resources, health, and emergency services raises the danger level to the peak. Repeated cycles of displacement and loss without proper adaptation measures put them into something that's called a poverty trap.

The Economic Case for Inclusive Climate Policies

The citizens cannot be oblivious to their major role in Mumbai's economy, contributing to industries like textiles, food production, and services. As the world's second-largest producer of fish, India's culture fisheries account for nearly half of the country's inland fish production, and the sector has consistently increased in gross value, accounting for 5.23% of agricultural GDP. From the aboriginal Koli fisherfolk of Mumbai whose livelihood has revolved around fishing for around 500 years to the Agri tribe being the major salt and rice producers. The fishing industry has employed approximately 14.5 million people in India. Protecting these communities through inclusive climate policies ensures the stability of their livelihoods and, by extension, the broader economy of the MMR.

The need of the hour is to bridge the gap between sustainability and social equity. Let's look at a few best practices which we could inculcate for the same. Policies like Kenya's Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy, which are specially designed to help increase marginalized farmers, pastoralists, and fisherfolk's ability to adapt to and withstand the negative effects of climate change. The KCSA strategy is inclusive because it prioritizes providing training, access to technology, and financial support to the marginalized farming communities who are most at risk from the effects of climate change. Policies like the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) in India also set a remarkable example of how India is committed to making climate change and sustainability equitable.

With the capability approach as a lens through which to see these inequalities, these are no longer just a matter of who has more or less wealth but, rather, who has freedom over a life of dignity and security. In this regard, it means true development cannot be measured through GDP or any form of wealth but is about what people can do and be. And in the case of Mumbai's slum dwellers, their fundamental capabilities to have safe shelter, clean water, healthcare, and even the basic ability to escape harm's way are constantly under threat.

The elite or the so-called privileged can easily retreat to the safety of gated communities or evacuate in climate crises. This leaves climate change upon those with even less, often at an even deeper "adaptation," one in survival and coping out of raw necessity. Always rebuilding their lives over, fighting once again to locate the essential resources after another flood. Always striving hard for respite when hit by heatwaves. Climate adaptation strategies must flip this script. Instead of designing policies that cater to the elite's comfort, the focus should be on those whose lives hang in the balance, our slum dwellers. Building up their capabilities through secure housing, health care, clean water, and disaster preparedness is not just a reduction of suffering but an empowerment to design their futures in a fast-paced and unequal world. Those at the bottom must be at the forefront of fighting climate change because when that storm hits, it's their homes that crumble first, and their lives are hardest to rebuild.