

Dated: 30th October 2007

**Memorandum to the Municipal Commissioner (MCGM) on
Zone-wise Water Distribution by Private Companies that Threatens Access to
Water as Fundamental Human Rights**

Dear Dr. Jairaj M. Phatak,

We, the concerned citizens of Mumbai representing various community groups and ngos, appreciate and endorse the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) ambition to improve water distribution in the city. We also wish to express our gratitude for inviting our constituents to the 3rd stakeholder meeting scheduled for 13th November 2007, as conveyed to Mr Janak Daftari telephonically on the night of 29th October.

Having said this, we want to express, at the outset, our unconditional rejection of pre-paid water meters to prevent any risk whatsoever to the fundamental right to water for all citizens. The reasons are patently obvious, and in passing we would like to draw an example from the recent pandemic outbreak of cholera in Natal, South Africa.

Further, there has been some media coverage of MCGM's "Sujal Mumbai" initiative, which promises to alleviate some of the city's water supply problems through private participation. However, only sketchy details have been provided in these reports. A glaring and worrisome omission is any mention of structural reforms in the water department of the MCGM. We fear that outsourcing of water services to the private sector will transform water from a fundamental human right, a common heritage that belongs to all Mumbaikars, into a commodity and sold to only those who can pay for it.

1. To comply with MCGM's mandatory requirements, you are required to provide us the following information on the zonal contract scheme:
2. Genesis of the plan to outsource some functions of the water department, whether based on any survey/ study by MCGM or other agency,
3. Details/ track record of the six zonal contracting firms, and the contracts awarded to them,
4. Process of selection and list of all other applicants (not selected) for these works,

5. Proposed/ planned enhancements, if any, of other functions to be contracted in the long-term perspective,
6. The function to be performed by the technical consultant, whether mandated by the World Bank; and their qualifications.

It is imperative you provide this public-domain information at the earliest to ensure we are better informed about the steps you are undertaking for public good.

It is even more imperative that a consultation is held with the citizens before implementation of this scheme, to ensure that it is not deemed illicit and to suit vested interests. Till that time, we urge you not to grant any contract under the zonal contract scheme.

Since Mumbai water department has been known worldwide for its excellent water supply and distribution under a public utility, therefore we urge you to strengthen the present structure and go for establishing a public-public partnership model (vis-à-vis to public private partnership) to provide equitable, affordable and efficient water services to all Mumbaikars.

Assuring you of our total co-operation as concerned citizens of Mumbai and thanking you for your prompt response.

Thanking you,

Signatories

Name
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Organisations

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