

newSLetter

Issue 1/2025

The House Journal of **Borivli & Suburban Zoroastrian Association** (Registration no. F-3992)

Editor: **Khurshed Pastakia**

Views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of BASZA



BASZA' s
Jamshedi Navroz
Celebration

Housie & Dinner

7:00 pm, Sunday 23rd March, 2025
at Rustumjee School, Dahisar

members ₹100, guests ₹150

PLEASE REGISTER WITH ANY OF THE FOLLOWING LATEST BY FRIDAY, 21 MAR 2025

Minoo/Perviz Khan: 9821332733/9821917242; Yazdi/Khurshid Motiwala: 9892102033;

Khurshed/Veera Pastakia: 9820622136; Jimmy/Keshmira Adajania: 9930737197;

Minoo Kotwal: 9820500523; Banoo/Mehernosh Mehta: 9773306261

dysfunctional solar panels at doongerwadi

Parsis seek restoration of solar panels at cemetery

Manoj Ramakrishnan
writes

Parsis have asked the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) to restore the defunct solar panels that were installed at the Doongerwadi cemetery at Malabar Hill to augment the Zoroastrian system of sky burials.

The cemetery, also called the Towers of Silence, are over 200 years old. The solar panels were set up as an experiment around 2001



years ago. A group of Parsis have offered to fund the restoration of the panels. They told the BPP, which manages the 50-acre wooded cemetery, that there are donors

who are ready to finance the project. After the vulture crisis, a section of the community set up a funeral centre at the Worldmunk...

hodium. The solar cells offer an alternative to those who prefer the bodies to be dried under solar concentrators, said Dr Viraf Mehta, resident of Nepean Sea Road. "The panels were approved by the high priests who said that the process does not violate religious traditions," Viraf Mehta, chairman of the BPP, said the solar equipment broke down just before the pandemic. "We will consult the high priests before we do anything. The

existing system is functioning without any hiccups even in the absence of the solar panels. We can install the solar panels ourselves if we have to," said Mehta. Others said that the solar panels were not needed. "There was a fire once at one of the dakhmas and it could have been caused by the heat from the solar concentrators," said Mehrnoosh Finer who had formed a group called 'Save Doongerwadi Committee'.

An orthodox group had suggested the setting up of a huge aviary in the cemetery to breed carrion birds like vultures. "But it is a risky proposition because of concerns about avian diseases. I will write to the BPP if something can be done about the solar panels," said Dr Kanti Dhalak of the World Zoroastrian Cultural Foundation who was a member of a group that promoted the solar panels two decades ago.

THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL

Thu, 27 February 2025
<https://epaper.freepressjournal.in/c/76959244>

In the absence of vultures, we have been repeatedly told that the system of Dokhmenashini functions by the use of solar panels. *The Community, by and large, believes in this assurance and a large number of bodies are being consigned to Doongerwadi only because of this promise.*

But, following rumours that the solar panels at Doongerwadi were non-functional, the Free Press Journal (FPJ) of 27th February broke the story that the panels, installed over 20 years ago, **have been non-functional for around the past four years!**

Replying to FPJ, BPP chairman Viraf Mehta, (son of ex-chairman Dinshaw Mehta) told the national daily, "We will consult the high priests before we do anything. **The existing system is functioning without any hiccups even in the absence of the solar panels.** We can install the solar panels ourselves if we have to." **This simply means that the BPP has confessed to the media that the solar panels have been non-functional.** A letter dated 19th February 2025 signed by some community members of Godrej Baug circulating on WhatsApp stated: "The present board (of BPP Trustees) was approached to

repair and restore (the panels) but lack of funds was stated as a reason for not repairing the same."

If this has been going on for four long years, every Parsi has the right to demand an explanation as to why the BPP has hidden this vital piece of information from the Community. And, now that the FPJ has let the cat out of the bag, Viraf Mehta has the audacity to say that the existing system (can it now even be called Dokhmenashini?) is functioning "without any hiccups even in the absence of the solar panels"!

2

fire at freemasons hall



2

On 15th February 2025 evening the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) was to have its annual general meeting followed by dinner at the Freemasons Hall opposite Sterling Cinema. At 2:20 pm a fire broke

out at the Hall, forcing the WZCC to postpone their program.

District Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge Kersi Limathwalla said: "We have four meeting rooms and three banquet rooms besides Masonic offices, lockers

and catering area. What got affected by the fire are the two meeting rooms and the rear part of premises on the first and second floors." Fortunately, no one was trapped in the building and the fire brigade fully extinguished the fire by 5.36 pm.

farzana's uppercrust

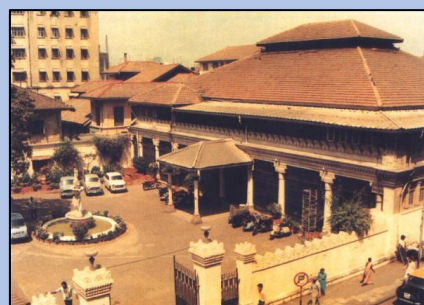


All Bombayites of the late 1990s generation unfailingly remember the phenomenal daily column "Round & About" by Busybee (Behram Contractor), the slouchy, lanky, almost brittle and taciturn columnist of the Evening News, Mid-Day and (owner of) the

Afternoon Dispatch & Courier. He passed away in 2001 but left a 30-years younger than him wife, Farzana, who took up the baton of food journalism: starting and managing almost singlehanded India's first food and beverage magazine, Uppercrust.

A galaxy of who's who of the food industry turned up at Bombay's Blue Sea to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the iconic magazine on 18th January 2025 and to congratulate Farzana for her spirit that is no less than Behram's.

fire~temple ashes



What do our places of worship do with the huge amount of ash that they generate? The 50 fire temples in Mumbai generate ash from the fires that burn 24 x 7. A few of them that have a garden bury the ashes there or strew it under the trees. But most of them do not have such facility. They hire a boat and dispose of the ashes into the sea.

Now the BMC has banned the disposal of ashes in water bodies, including the sea. This is because wood ash, being highly alkaline, raises the water's pH levels and harms aquatic life and the environment. The BPP has stepped in to help by creating special pits on the Doongerwadi grounds. Already, the Aslaji and Ashburner agiyaris, and Dadiseth

Atashbehram have started using this facility. Others are likely to follow.

The deep pits are made near the car park and away from the main forest area of Doongerwadi grounds so as not to harm the forest ecosystem. Once full, the pit would be covered with soil.

where there's alcohol, there's a Bawa



4

Alcohol drinking by Muslims is prohibited in Pakistan but consumption is permitted to the 4% non-Muslim population. And right enough, it is a Parsi who dominates the alcohol business there.

The Bhandara Family acquired the Murree Brewery from the British in 1947 and Isphanyar Bhandara now runs this most successful business, taking pride on using the best raw materials. Besides making single malt whisky, vodka, rum, gin, liqueur, energy drinks

and bottled water, Murree is most famous for its excellent beer.

Isphanyar is also a member of the Pakistan National Assembly and his father had served as central minister in Zia-ul-Haq's regime.

¹ BASZA expresses gratitude to publications like Parsi Khabar, Parsiana, Jam é Jamshed,

Parsi Times, Times of India, and others, from where we may have condensed the published

items and images in this issue with editorial changes.

ecofriendly udvada

The Clean & Green Charitable Trust (CGCT) has installed three solar panels, sponsored by Tata Power, at Udvada. These panels will significantly reduce the cost of streetlights and ensure a source of power to the village's

composting machine in Udvada Gam.

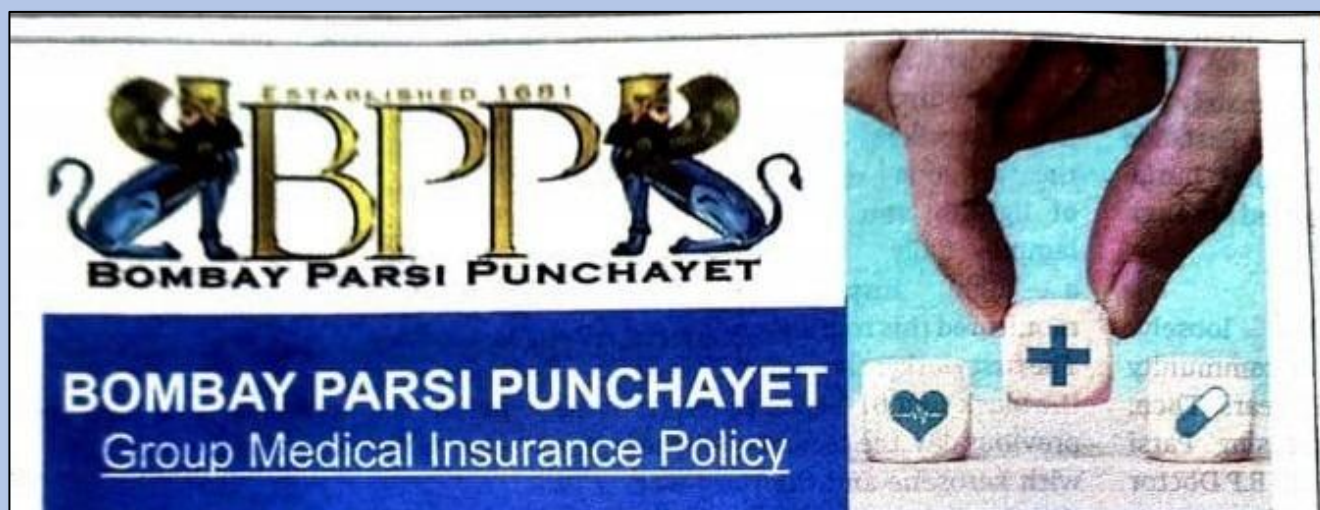
Vada Dasturji Tehemton Mirza broke a coconut to symbolically launch the project before a gathering including Sarpanch Dharmendra Patel, Deputy

Sarpanch Sarosh Irani, co-founders and trustees of CGCT: Zarine Bhada and Filly Bapuna. CGCT is now seeking donors to sponsor a composting machine to further Udvada's sustainability initiatives. Donors may contact Velati at +91 98333 33388.



bpp's group insurance

5



We bring to the attention of our readers an announcement made by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet in Parsi Times of 1st February 2025 (last page). Many senior citizens and others who may not already have personal medical insurance, or who may not be eligible to take a policy due to their advanced age,

may wish to avail of this facility as medical expenses are sky-rocketing in Mumbai.

Readers may make their own inquiries with the BPP and take their own decisions.