



Citizens' Manifesto

Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024





MAHARASHTRA DEMOCRATIC FORUM (MDF)

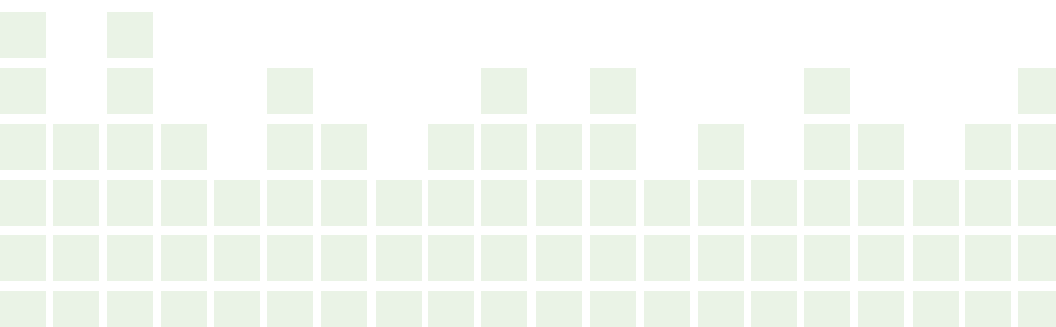
Citizens' Manifesto for Maharashtra

Assembly Elections 2024

Released by:



Maharashtra
Democratic
Forum



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INTRODUCTION

The elections for Maharashtra state government are set to take place in November 2024. The current and incumbent state government had come to power by using devious means, money and muscle power. We from the Maharashtra Democratic Forum strongly call upon the peace loving, democratic, progressive and secular people of Maharashtra to unite and give a decisive mandate against forces of hatred and divisive politics. Against forces that are fascists and slaves to crony capitalists. Forces that are anti-people and endanger our constitution and the values that it enshrines. Here is a Charter Of Demands for the Progressive parties that are contesting elections. We hope they implement this CITIZENS' MANIFESTO, once they are elected to power.



CASTE CENSUS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The new government must conduct a caste census to obtain a holistic understanding of the population of each caste community and their concomitant access to resources. Accordingly, affirmative action must be taken to alleviate the problems of the marginalized communities like the SC/ST and OBCs. The issue of Maratha Reservation must be seen with objectivity and sensitivity, and the Marath community's demands for reservation should be considered with empathy.

FARMERS' ISSUES

For long, Maharashtra has suffered from agrarian crisis, which has spiraled into being the worst in the last few years. Farmers' suicide has exponentially increased due to policies of central and state government. In Amravati alone, 363 farmers have died by suicide in between 2014 and 2022. Similarly, in Akola, Yavatmal and Vidarbha districts the number of farmers dying by suicide have increased during Modi regime than the UPA rule. The issues of electricity, MSP, loans and interest, natural disasters like famine and aridness are plaguing the conditions of the farmers in the state. Lack of MSP, crop insurance and other waivers and incentives have made agriculture a difficult and disastrous occupation.





DEMANDS

- ▲ There must be constitution of a Farmers' Commission to comprehensively look into the various problems related to Farmers and give binding recommendations to the State government.
- ▲ Farmers must be provided with free and subsidised electricity for agricultural purposes.
- ▲ The state government must ensure Minimum Support Price (MSP) as per the Swaminathan Commission Recommendations and implement that with immediate effect.
- ▲ The bad loans of farmers especially after crop failure must be waived.
- ▲ Crops must be insured by the government to compensate farmers after crop failure or natural disaster
- ▲ The disaster stricken farmers like the onion, cotton and soybean farmers should be given special relief packages.
- ▲ There should be regular assurance and awareness drives to prevent farmer suicides.
- ▲ Incentive packages must be started for women farmers.
- ▲ Farmers should be able to procure farm equipments, seeds and fertilisers without GST.

YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

India has more than 50% of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65% below the age of 35. In a rapidly evolving global economy, equipping our youth with market-relevant skills is crucial. The unemployment rates among educated youth in Maharashtra are all time higher in the last one decade. According to the ILO report, the unemployment rates among educated youth in 2022 were 15% which is 11 percent higher than a decade earlier. Overall unemployment rate, Maharashtra clocked 3.3% in 2023-24, slightly higher than the national unemployment rate of 3.2% for the same period. Within four months of Eknath Shinde becoming CM of Maharashtra, four major projects slipped out of the state to Gujarat. These four projects totalling a staggering Rs 1.80 lakh crore investment have also taken lakhs of jobs from the state, thus affecting the employment scenario in Maharashtra.

DEMANDS

- ▲ Maharashtra's share of India's invested capital was 14.5 percent in 2013-14 which fell to 12 percent five years later. So the actions must be taken by the upcoming governments to ensure that no project or investment leaves Maharashtra for political reasons.



- ▲ On the other hand the upcoming government should guarantee that every graduate and diploma holder, below 25 years of age, will have a Right to Apprenticeship, by making it mandatory for companies to accept apprentices for one-year, with a stipend of 1 Lakh, shared by the government and companies.
- ▲ Enhanced Skills for Youth: Boost youth employability through skill enhancement, vocational training, digital literacy and providing training for tailor-made jobs as per requirement of industries.
- ▲ Competitive Exam reform: Eliminate fees for examinations to Government jobs, one-time relief for aspirants who lost opportunity during the pandemic period and strict policies to prevent and take action to address exam paper leakages.
- ▲ The upcoming government should ensure 50 per cent reservation for women in jobs.
- ▲ The government should take initiatives to scrap Agniveer and it should ensure equal rights and compensation for the Agniveers



EDUCATION

Government schools in shambles: In the last two years public education has faced several setbacks in Maharashtra. The government schools, which are mostly Marathi medium are severely suffering. More than 1 lakh students have been affected due to government negligence. The state govt started 'One state, One Uniform', but failed to deliver quality and wrong sized uniforms to 60% students. The quality of midday meals have also reduced drastically due to lack of compensation to contractors. In many schools midday meals have stopped altogether, particularly in remote and hilly areas where the number of students are less. The increased workload on teachers and contractualisation of the teaching positions are making teaching as a career in public education extremely difficult. Change in curriculum has also affected level of teaching in the state.

THE POOR STATE OF URDU MEDIUM SCHOOLS

As per the academic calendar of 2023 recruitments were made in these schools with candidates from non-urdu background. This undermines and endangers Urdu learning in all these schools, because in primary school one teacher has to teach all subjects. Educationists have protested against such prejudiced recruitments. Also Urdu medium schools are recognised till Class 7 and must extend the recognition till Class 12.





DEMANDS

- ▲ Ensure recruitment of permanent teachers in Govt schools.
- ▲ Ensure high quality, high protein midday meal in every school.
- ▲ Ensure uniforms of good quality and all sizes are available in government schools and scrap the unnecessary 'One state, one uniform' policy.
- ▲ Take special measures to push for more girls' education and launch government incentives to facilitate girls' education.
- ▲ Ensure education to minority students and prevent systemic discrimination.
- ▲ Recruit teachers from Urdu backgrounds in urdu medium schools and extend the recognition of Urdu medium schools till class 12 and not till class 7 as it is currently.

LAW TO PREVENT HATE SPEECHES

There had been a spike in hate speeches in India, particularly targeting Muslim and other minorities. India Hate Lab documented 668 hate speech incidents targeting Muslims in 2023, 255 of which occurred in the first half of the year while 413 took place in the last six months of 2023. In Maharashtra alone 118 cases of hate speeches were recorded in 2023. The numbers of hate speeches soar particularly around elections. The vilification of minority communities and provoking them by attacking their God, religious practices or Prophets have regularly taken place in order to polarise voters. Vilification, demonisation of minority communities have taken place in mainstream media too that tantamounts to hate speech. The issues of hate speeches by prominent BJP leaders like Nitesh Rane and Navneet Rana are known to all. Such incidents can be stopped, when culprits are regularly brought to book.

DEMAND

A law must be brought to prevent hate speech that propagates prejudice about communities, demeaning them or instigating violence against them.





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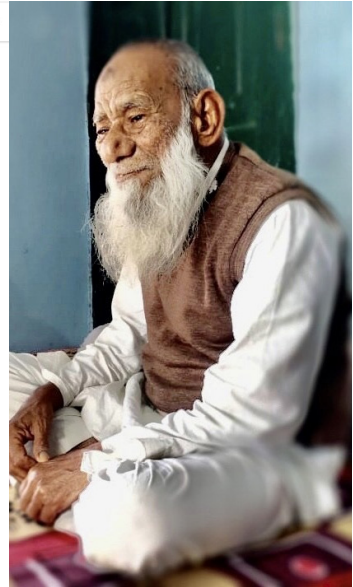
Features

The Maharashtra Muslims acquitted of 'terrorism' after 25 years

Activists say Muslims are often victims of wrongful conviction as accused men reflect on case that ruined their lives.



Jamil Ahmad Khan, right, and 10 others were acquitted 25 years after being accused of terrorism; here he is pictured with wife Rehana (Bilal Kuchay/Al Jazeera)



REPEAL DRACONIAN LAWS

A plethora of draconian laws like UAPA, NSA, MCOCA are being used regularly in the last ten years, particularly targeting minorities and other marginalised sections. These laws are used vindictively to keep people from the marginalised communities in prisons for long years without trial or bail. The conviction rate in these laws are abysmally low and they are against the spirit of democracy and fair trial. Because these laws are deliberately being used against marginalised sections particularly targeting Minorities and to silence voices of dissent and criticism, these draconian laws must be repealed.

DEMAND

Repeal laws like MCOCA. Expedite trials against all political prisoners detained under such laws.

POLICE REFORMS

In the last ten years, there has been alarming instances of institutional bigotry shown by the police force against Muslims in particular. The pliant role of police in not doing fair investigation in cases of mob lynching, right wing attack, riots etc on one hand, and excessive, unjust and often illegal force used in custodial torture, encounter, extra judicial killing targeting muslim minorities have become normalised in the last ten years. This must stop in order to restore democracy and stop the country from turning into a police state. The accountability of Police forces must be ensured and the impunity with which they have been targeting minorities must stop.

The presence of Muslims in the Indian police force is also abysmal. In 2010, it was found that sans Jammu and Kashmir, only 64805 Muslim individuals were a part of the police force, which formed a mere 4.31% of the total police force. The Muslim representation in Indian police has "remained consistently low" at 3 to 4 percent ever since. Moreover, Since 2013, the National Crimes Records Bureau annual report has ceased reporting the level of Muslim representation in the police.



DEMANDS

- ▲ There should be reservation in the Police forces for minorities in order to make the Police force diverse and ensure representatives from marginalised communities.
- ▲ There should be regular sensitisation of the Police Force at all levels, to ensure they protect the values of the constitution.
- ▲ The Police force should be held accountable and punitive actions must be taken against police officers who execute extra judicial actions like custodial torture or encounters.
- ▲ The departments of Investigation and Law and order should be separated and the recruitment in the police force should be increased, ensuring diverse representation.

ILLEGAL BULLDOZER JUSTICE

In the last few years, there has been consistent use of bulldozers to demolish houses, shops, crops and other properties, mostly belonging to minority communities. This has taken place in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Uttarakhand where BJP governments were present. But recently the Ekanth Shinde government has also started this illegal practice in Maharashtra after alleged stone pelting during Ram Temple rally in Mumbai in January 2024. The fact that maximum victims of bulldozer demolition are from minority communities, is not by exception but sheer design. Instantly using bulldozers on any properties, without due process of law reflects severe apathy towards not just the victims and utter disregard to legal processes.

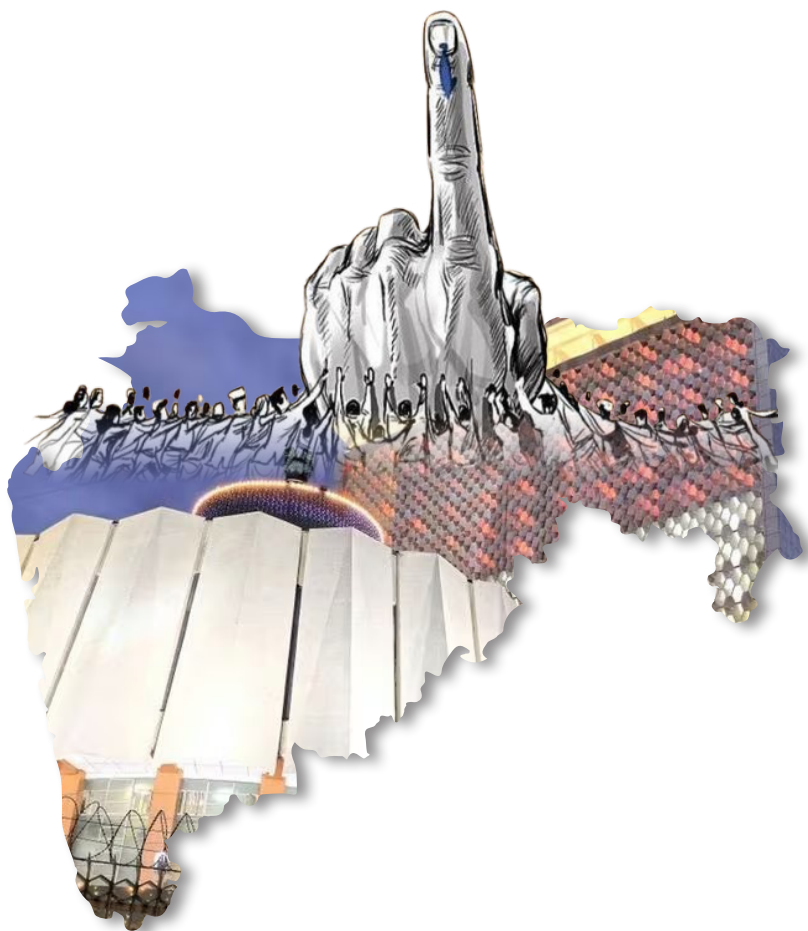
DEMANDS

Recently the Supreme Court has issued guidelines against instant demolition of houses by Bulldozer. The state government should adhere to these Supreme Court guidelines and immediately stop the illegal use of bulldozers.



CONCLUSION

We have posed these demands to the upcoming government in Maharashtra. The nature of demands requires us to have a democratic, secular, progressive and justice oriented government in the state instead of a centralized, ideologically right wing government. To ensure that the undemocratic, sectarian and communal forces don't come to power in the upcoming elections, all the like minded parties who believes in the Indian Constitution and its ideals, must come together to form a meaningful alliance, to stop division of votes and also ensure that the people's mandate is not stolen by the tricks and use of power.



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Prepared by
SPECT Foundation