

Peoples' Awareness on Municipal Council in Aizawl

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ABSTRACT

With the increase and growth of urbanisation decentralisation of power to urban local bodies had become a major policy initiative of the Indian Government. Mizoram had undergone rapid urbanisation and according to 2011 Census more than half (52.11%) of the total population resides in urban areas. Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram is home to more than one-third of the total population. Through the enactment and enforcement of the 74th Constitutional Amendment, Aizawl Municipal Council was formed in 2008 which was upgraded to Corporation in 2015 by the Fourth Amendment of the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007. The concept of Municipal Council administration is very new to the citizens of Mizoram. This paper attempts to probe into the awareness of people on Aizawl Municipal Council among 134 households in two localities namely Bungkawn representing high level development locality and Zemabawk representing low level of development.

Keywords: Urban governance, Municipal Council, Aizawl Municipal Council, awareness

Introduction

The rapid urbanisation, urban growth and the challenges associated with them necessitate decentralised governance in the global context. Increase in urban population had led to a decline in the quality of life and poor basic service delivery in urban areas. To face the challenges of urbanisation, the government of India had taken a series of action for strengthening local-level governance (Aijaz, 2007).

In the Indian context, decentralisation is a major strategy for the development of urban areas. Delegation of power and responsibilities to municipal bodies is a result of urbanisation (Bagchi and Chattopadhyay, 2004). In 1992 the government of India passed the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts which empower the local bodies by entrusting greater administrative and financial powers to them. The 74th Constitutional Amendment strengthens the Municipal Bodies by giving it more power and autonomy for urban self-governance. This new approach redefined governance, management and the bond between the State and local bodies. The role of Municipalities was strengthened with development processes involving all sections of society including the poor and marginalized (Rao, 2006).

Overview of Literature

There is copious literature on decentralisation and governance in the global context as the challenges of urbanization is widely recognised. Attempt had been made to study the challenges and opportunities of decentralisation (UNPF, 2000; Linder, 2004). Decentralisation and development policy implementation in developing countries had also been studied (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1984). Moreover, citizens' participation in decentralisation had been probed into (Hagberg, 2010) and the limits of decentralisation (Rivera, 2001) had also been studied. Urban governance and development had also been widely studied by different people. Some works have attempted to explain the concept of

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urban local governance (Lange, 2010; Rashid et. al., 2009; Chan and Hu, 2004). There is a copious literature urban government in the Indian context too. In the Indian context, there are some works using citizen's opinion as a tool for measuring urban government's performance. Citizen's evaluation of public services through the Citizens Report Card survey assessment of the impact of Bangalore's Report Card had been probed into (Ravindra, 2004). Evaluation of public services from the user perspective had also been studied (Paul et al, 2004). Studies had been conducted on municipal awareness; interest and participation of citizens (Mohanty, 1993). There are also a few studies in North-East India which focus on the problems and prospects of urban Local Government (Medhi, 2006; Singh and Kumar, 2006) and municipal personnel management (Mukhoppadhyay, 2006). In the context of Mizoram, there are studies which attempted on urban local governance and development. They focus on urban administration and its challenges (Lalchhuanawma, 2018, Ralte, 2015, Doungel, 2010; Singh, 2010; Lianzela, 2006; Prasad 2006), prospects of municipal government (Chakraborty, 2006, Chhuanawma 2011) or the relevance of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 to Mizoram (ADB, 2009; Prasad 2006; Satapathy 2006).

The field of urban governance and development is very fertile as a few significant research gaps could be noted. Firstly, there are a few empirical studies on the working of urban local bodies using people's perception and in the Indian context. Secondly, in the northeastern region, very few empirical studies have been conducted on the working of urban local bodies or local governance. Thirdly, people's awareness of local bodies has not been adequately probed into. The present study tries to fill these research gaps by way of surveying households in representative urban localities in Aizawl city.

The Context and Research Problem

Mizoram is one of the highly urbanised states in India. Though the urban population of Mizoram constitutes a mere 0.1 per cent in terms of the absolute urban population in India more than one half (52.11 %) of its population resides in urban areas. More than one-third of its population (26.74%) of the State population is accommodated by its capital city Aizawl alone.

The local administration was under the purview of the village chiefs during the British raj. The traditional Chieftainship was abolished in Mizoram and was replaced by Village Councils which was formed under of Lushai Hill District (Village Council) Act, 1953. However, their functions and powers were very minimal concerning development. Before the commencement of Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) in 2008, the functions of Municipalities as specified in the 12th Schedule was administered by the state government departments such as Local Administration Department (LAD), Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation (UD&PA), Public Health Engineering Department (PHE), Public Work Department (PWD), Aizawl Development Authority (ADA) and so forth.

Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) was constituted in June 2008 under the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007. The Act was further amended in November 2009 and in April, August and November, 2015. Two years after the Act was passed, the first Aizawl Municipal Election was held on 3rd November 2010. There are 83 Local Councils erstwhile Village Councils within the jurisdiction of the Aizawl Municipal Council. The Aizawl Municipal Council consists of 19 elected counsellors of whom 13 are male and 6 are female.

In this context, the present study probes into the awareness of people on the urban local government which has commenced its functioning in Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. It also explores into the demographic, social and economic determinants of awareness. The

awareness of the people is probed in terms of the composition, functions and powers of the municipal council.

METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in design and cross-sectional in nature. It is based on primary data collected during July – September 2011 through field survey with structured pretested household interview schedule from the sample households.

The unit of study is household while respondents are any adult member of the household. All the households in the urban area of Aizawl constituted the population of the study.

Firstly, the study is conducted in Aizawl city purposively as it houses a majority of the urban population (59%) in Mizoram (GOM, 2008). Secondly, the 79 localities of Aizawl city were classified into high and low levels of socio-economic development based on three household indicators viz., the proportion of poor households, proportion of households with telephone, and proportion of households having LPG connection (GOM, 2008). One representative locality was chosen from each of the categories i.e. to represent the Locality at the high level of development Bungkawn Veng was chosen and to represent Locality at the low level of development Zemabawk North was selected. Thirdly, in the two selected localities, the list of poor and non-poor households was collected from the Village Council President. Lastly, in each of the category, using systematic random sampling households were selected. The sample was proportionately distributed across poor and non-poor categories collected from the Village Council and low and high level of development. Systematically households were selected with an interval of 10 in the HDC and with an interval of 8 in the LDC. From the total population of 66883 households in Aizawl, the sample size was 0.2 percent which was 134 in total (57 in HDC and 77 in LDC).

A structured household interview schedule was used for the collection of data for the present study which consists of demographic profile, socio-economic profile, access, quality and satisfaction over basic services, socio-economic challenges, and perceived problems and functions.

The quantitative data collected through field survey was processed with of Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To analyse data, besides, simple statistical methods of averages, percentages, ratios and proportions, Spearman's rho correlation was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are discussed in five major subsections. The first section presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The second section presents the economic and political profile of the respondents. In the third section, people's awareness is discussed. Differences in People's Awareness on Municipal Council in Aizawl are discussed in the fourth section while in the fifth section the determinants of people's awareness on AMC are discussed.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age group educational status, type of family and size of family across the two communities are described here (See Table 1).

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristic	Locality Development		Total N = 134
	Low n = 77	High n = 57	
Gender			
Male	59 (76.62)	31 (54.39)	90 (67.16)
Female	18 (23.38)	26 (45.61)	44 (32.84)
Age Group			
Young (Below 35)	8 (10.39)	9 (15.79)	17 (12.69)
Middle (35-60 Years)	41 (53.25)	28 (49.12)	69 (51.49)
Old (60 Years and Above)	28 (36.36)	20 (35.09)	48 (35.82)
<i>Mean Age</i>	54.9 ± 14.6	51.6 ± 17.2	53.5 ± 15.8
Education Status			
Primary(1-4)	29 (37.7)	6 (10.5)	35 (26.1)
Middle (5-7)	18 (23.4)	12 (21.1)	30 (22.4)
High School (8-10)	9 (11.7)	8 (14.0)	17 (12.7)
Higher Secondary (11-12)	9 (11.7)	13 (22.8)	22 (16.4)
Under Graduation & Above	12 (15.6)	18 (31.6)	30 (22.4)
Type of Family			
Nuclear	61 (79.22)	25 (43.86)	86 (64.18)
Joint	16 (20.78)	32 (56.14)	48 (35.82)
Size of Family			
Small (1-3)	10 (12.99)	11 (19.30)	21 (15.67)
Medium (4 -6)	46 (59.74)	32 (56.14)	78(58.21)
Large (7 and Above)	21 (27.27)	14 (24.56)	35 (26.12)
<i>Mean Family Size</i>	5.6 ± 2.3	5.4 ± 2.3	5.5 ± 2.3

Source: Computed Mean ± SD Figures in parentheses are percentages

As regards gender, a significant difference could be observed in the distribution of respondents between the localities. More than half (67%) of the respondents were male in both the localities while female respondents constitute less than one third (33%). Male respondents were found to be higher in the Locality at the low level of development (76%) and female respondent were higher in Locality at the high level of development (46%).

Age is the second demographic characteristic. Concerning age, not much difference could be observed between the two types of localities. Most of the respondents in both the localities belonged to the middle age group (35-60 Years).

Education is the third demographic characteristic taken up for discussion. The difference could be observed with regards to educational status between the respondents across the two localities. The educational status of the respondents belonging to the locality at a high level of development is better as compared to those in the locality at a low level of development.

Most of the respondents from the locality at a high level of development have crossed the high school while a majority of them have not completed middle school education in the locality at a low level of development.

Type of family is the fourth demographic characteristic of the respondents discussed here. A significant difference could be observed in the type of family in both the communities as most of the respondents belonged to nuclear family in the Locality at the low level of development (79%) while most of them belonged to a joint family in the Locality at the high level of development (56%).

Size of the family is the fifth demographic characteristic discussed here. Medium size of the family was a dominant size and constitute more than half (58%) in both the localities. The same pattern of distribution of the size of the family could be found in both the localities.

Economics and Political Characteristics

Economic and political characteristics are discussed in terms of socio-economic category and political party affiliation (see table 2).

Table 2 Economic and Political Characteristics

Characteristic	Locality Development		Total N = 134
	Low n = 77	High n = 57	
Socio-Economic Category			
Very Poor(AAY)	9 (11.69)	2 (3.51)	11 (8.21)
Poor(BPL)	15 (19.48)	9 (15.79)	24 (17.91)
Non-poor(APL)	53 (68.83)	46 (80.70)	99 (73.88)
Political Party Affiliation			
None	55 (71.43)	39 (68.42)	94 (70.15)
Supporter	17 (22.08)	9 (15.79)	26(19.40)
Member	3 (3.90)	6 (10.53)	9 (6.72)
Office Bearer	2 (2.60)	3 (5.26)	5 (3.73)

Source: Computed Figures in parentheses are percentages

Respondents were classified into three socio-economic categories viz. very poor category that are covered by the government Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) scheme, poor category who are Below Poverty Line (BPL) and those who are Above Poverty Line (APL). With regards to the socio-economic category, a significant difference could be found between the two types of localities. Though the majority of the respondents across the localities belong to the non-poor category, the proportion of poor was greater in the locality at a low level of development as compared to the other. More than three fourth of the respondents from the locality at the high level of development belongs to the non-poor category while more than one half of them belong to this category in the locality at the low level of development.

With regards to political party affiliation, the majority (70.15%) of the respondents claimed that they do not have any political party affiliation while only 19.40 % of affiliates with a

political party. Some respondents (6%) were members of the political party while only a few were office bearers (3%) of a political party. There is not much difference between these two types of localities in political affiliation.

Awareness and on Municipal Council in Aizawl

The people's awareness on Aizawl Municipal Council is conceptualised in terms of four components such as awareness on the composition, name of members, obligatory functions and the discretionary powers of Aizawl Municipal Council. Each of the components was measured in terms of several binary indicators. These components of people's awareness are discussed discretely as well as aggregate indices for their differences.

Composition of AMC

Table 3 Composition, Tenure and Powers

Indicator	Locality Development		Total N = 134
	Low n = 77	High n = 57	
Composition of AMC	18 (23.38)	15 (26.32)	33 (24.63)
Tenure of AMC	19 (24.68)	28 (49.12)	47 (35.07)
Powers of Chairman	4 (5.19)	5 (8.77)	9 (6.72)

Source: Computed

Figures in parentheses are percentages

The first component of people's awareness of AMC consists of the respondent's knowledge of the composition, tenure, and powers of the Chairman (see table 6). Composition of the AMC is the first indicator of this component. In both the localities, a very few of the respondents were aware of the composition of the AMC and there is not much difference in the proportion of respondents who were aware of that between them. More than one-fourth of the respondents in the locality at the high level of development (26%) were aware of the composition of AMC while more than one-fifth of them in the locality at low development (23%) were aware of it.

The tenure of Aizawl Municipal Council was the second indicator of this component. In this indicator, a greater proportion of the respondents was aware in the locality at a high level of development as compared to those in the locality at a low level of development. Nearly one-half of the respondents from the locality at the high level of development had aware of the tenure of the AMC while only one-fourth of them in the locality at the low level of development aware of that.

The third indicator is the powers of the chairman. Very few of the respondents across the localities were aware of the powers of the chairman of AMC. Less than one-tenth (6%) of the respondents in both the communities knew the powers of the Chairman.

Names of Members of AMC

The second component of people's awareness is the names of members of Aizawl Municipal which includes the Chairman, Vice- Chairman, three Executive Councillors and the members (see table 4).

Table 4 Name of Members

Name	Locality Development		Total N = 134
	Low n = 77	High n = 57	
Chairman	32 (41.56)	46 (80.70)	78 (58.21)
Vice Chairman	72 (93.51)	8 (14.04)	80 (59.70)
Exe. Councillor	17 (22.08)	3 (5.26)	20 (14.93)
Exe. Councillor	16 (20.78)	3 (5.26)	19 (14.18)
Exe. Councillor	18 (23.38)	3 (5.26)	21(15.67)
Member01	42 (54.55)	33 (57.89)	75 (55.97)
Member02	22 (28.57)	20 (35.09)	42 (31.34)
Member03	9 (11.69)	11 (19.30)	20 (14.93)
Member04	3 (3.90)	5 (8.77)	8 (5.97)
Member05	2 (2.60)	0 (0.00)	2 (1.49)
Member06	1 (1.30)	1 (1.75)	2 (1.49)

Source: Computed

Figures in parentheses are percentages

Most of the respondents in both the localities were not aware of the names of the executive members of the AMC. However, most of the respondents in the locality at the high level of development were aware of the chairman of the AMC while of most of them in the locality at the low level of development was aware of the Vice-Chairman of AMC. More than four-fifths of the respondents at the high level of development was aware of the name of the Chairman while less than one-fifth of them in the locality at low-level development was aware of his name. On the other hand, more than four-fifths of the respondents in the locality at the low level of development were aware of the Vice-Chairman of AMC while less than one-fourth of them in the locality at the high level of development was aware of his name.

Though a majority of the respondents in both the localities were not aware of the executive councillors, the proportion of respondents aware of them was greater in the locality at the low level of development as compared to those at the high level of development. More than one-fifth of the respondents in the locality at the low level of development was aware of at least one executive councillor while only a few of them were aware of them in the locality at the high level of development.

Obligatory Functions of AMC

The obligatory functions of AMC were considered as the third component of people's awareness of AMC. The obligatory functions comprise of ten categories viz. solid waste management, drainage and sewerage, water supply, communication systems, transport system accessories, community health and protection of the environment, preparation of plan for economic development and social justice, promotion of education, sport and cultural activities, market and slaughterhouse and aesthetic environment. The respondents were asked about these functions to know whether they are aware of them or not (see table 5).

Table 5 Obligatory Functions

Function	Locality Development		Total N = 134
	Low n = 77	High n = 57	
Solid Waste Management	14 (18.18)	19 (33.33)	33 (24.63)
Drainage And Sewerage	5 (6.49)	22 (38.60)	27 (20.15)
Water Supply	3 (3.90)	13 (22.81)	16 (11.94)
Communication Systems	4 (5.19)	9 (15.79)	13 (9.70)
Transport System Accessories	2 (2.60)	10 (17.54)	12 (8.96)
Community Health And Protection Of Environment	3 (3.90)	5 (8.77)	8 (5.97)
Planning for Economic Development & Social Justice	1 (1.30)	6 (10.53)	7 (5.22)
Promotion of Educational, Sport & Cultural Activities	1 (1.30)	2 (3.51)	3 (2.24)
Markets and Slaughter House	0 (0.00)	2 (3.51)	2(1.49)
Aesthetic Environment	0 (0.00)	1 (1.75)	1(0.75)

Source: Computed

Figures in parentheses are percentages

Most of the respondents were not aware of any of the obligatory functions of the AMC. However, some of them were aware of solid waste management, maintenance of drainage and sewerage, provision of water supply and maintenance of communication systems as obligatory functions of AMC. A significantly greater proportion of the respondents from the locality at a high level of development was aware of all the obligatory functions as compared to those in the locality at a low level of development.

Discretionary Functions AMC

Awareness of discretionary function of AMC was considered as the fourth component of people's awareness on AMC. The discretionary functions of Aizawl Municipal Council consist of three main functions which were again divided into three sub-categories viz. town planning, urban development and development of commercial infrastructure, protection of the environment, education and culture (see table 6).

Of the three major discretionary functions of AMC, most of the respondents in both the localities were aware of only the first function viz. town planning i.e. Measures for the beautification of the municipal area. Most of them were not aware of the discretionary functions of AMC such as protection of environment and promotion of education and culture.

Differences in People's Awareness on Municipal Council in Aizawl

Table 7 Differences in People's Awareness on AMC

	Locality Development				't'
	Low n = 77		High n = 57		
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Composition, Tenure and Powers of AMC	0.18	0.30	0.28	0.35	1.82
Name of Members	0.28	0.23	0.21	0.17	1.81
Obligatory Functions	0.04	0.09	0.16	0.16	5.23**
Discretionary Functions	0.03	0.04	0.07	0.10	2.98**

Source: Computed

**P<0.01

*P<0.05

The indicators of people's awareness of AMC were all binary in nature. Simple averages of these indicators at the level of each of these four components were computed as indices of people's awareness on AMC. These indices were analysed for their locality differences. The significance of mean differences in the components of people's awareness of AMC has been analysed with the help of two-tailed t-test (see table 7).

As regards people's awareness on AMC there is no significant difference between the localities in the composition, tenure and powers of AMC, and name of members. On the other hand, there are significant differences in the people's awareness of obligatory and discretionary functions of AMC. Though people's awareness on the AMC was low in terms of the obligatory and discretionary powers, the respondents at the high level of development have greater awareness as compared to those from the locality at the low level of development.

Table 6 Discretionary Functions

Function	Locality Development		Total N = 134
	Low n = 77	High n = 57	
Town Planning, Urban Development and Infrastructure			
Measures for beautification of the municipal area	42 (54.55)	27 (47.37)	69 (51.49)
Planned development of new areas for human settlement	3 (3.90)	12 (21.05)	15 (11.19)
Collection of statistics and data, significant to the community	2 (2.60)	0 (0.00)	2 (1.49)
Integration of municipal plans with the district or regional plan	0 (0.00)	2 (3.51)	2 (1.49)
Protection of Environment			
Promotion of greenery through mass participation	1 (1.30)	8 (14.04)	9 (6.72)
Reclamation of wastelands, promotion of social forestry etc	0 (0.00)	8 (14.04)	8 (5.97)
Establishment and maintenance of nurseries for plants etc.	0 (0.00)	4 (7.02)	4 (2.99)
Construction and maintenance of cattle pounds	1 (1.30)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.75)
Measures for eradication of addiction of all kinds	0 (0.00)	1 (1.75)	1 (0.75)
Promotion of measures for abatement of all forms of pollution	0 (0.00)	1 (1.75)	1 (0.75)
Advancement of civic consciousness of public health and welfare	1 (1.30)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.75)
Education and Culture			
Promotion of civic education, adult education etc.	1 (1.30)	7 (12.28)	8 (5.97)
Promotion of culture activities music, sports and theatres	0 (0.00)	4 (7.02)	4 (2.99)
Advancement of science and technology in Urban Life	0 (0.00)	3 (5.26)	3 (2.24)
Maintenance of monuments and places of Importance	0 (0.00)	1 (1.75)	1 (0.75)

Source: Computed

Figures in parentheses are percentages

Determinants of People's Awareness on AMC

Identification of the factors affecting awareness of people helps in identifying the target groups of intervention and the aspects of knowledge need to be imparted. To accomplish this Spearman's rho correlation has been computed between the independent variables such as demographic, social, economic and political characteristics of the respondents viz., age group, gender, education status, gender of head of household, size of family, socio-economic category, political party affiliation while the dependent variables were the various components of awareness viz., composition, tenure and powers of Chairman, names of members, obligatory functions and discretionary functions (see table 8).

Table 8 Determinants of People's Awareness on AMC: Spearman's rho N = 134

Variable	Composition, Tenure and Powers of AMC	Name of Members	Obligatory Functions	Discretionary Functions
Age Group	-.09	-.10	-.09	.08
Gender	-.08	-.26**	.00	-.12
Education Status	.19*	.24**	.22**	.171*
Size of Family	.10	-.08	-.16*	-.04
Type of Family	.14	-.09	.23**	.215*
Socio-Economic category	.17*	.12	.00	.10
Political Party Affiliation	.31**	.408**	.12	.08
Composition, Tenure & Powers of AMC	1.0	.478**	.39**	.27**
Name of Members	.48**	1.0	.23*	.18*
Members Party	.49**	.933**	.19*	.14
Obligatory Functions	.39**	.203*	1.0	.46**
Discretionary Functions	.27**	.189*	.48**	1.0

Source: Computed

**P<0.01

*P<0.05

The correlation analysis reveals that all the components of people's awareness viz., powers of chairman, name of AMC members, AMC member's party, obligatory functions, and discretionary functions of AMC have a significant positive relationship with each other as expected.

It also shows that gender, educational status, and political party affiliations are significantly related to people's awareness while age group does not affect awareness. In other words, the respondents across the different age groups have similar levels of awareness in all the components. Gender had a negative relationship with people's awareness. The female respondents have significantly lower awareness as compared to their male counterparts in terms of the names of members. But there is no significant gender difference in the awareness on composition powers of chairman, obligatory and discretionary functions.

There is a direct relationship between the respondent's educational status and awareness of AMC on all its components. The respondent's awareness of the powers of chairman, names of members, obligatory and discretionary functions all increase with increasing levels of education.

The socio-economic category has a significant effect on only the awareness on the composition, tenure of AMC and powers of chairman. However, there is no significant difference in the people's awareness on among the very poor, poor and non-poor categories of

respondents in awareness on the name of members, obligatory and discretionary functions of AMC.

Political party affiliation has a positive effect on people's awareness in most of its components. The higher the respondent's political affiliation greater is the people's awareness of the powers of chairman, name of members, and members party. On the other hand, political party affiliation has no significant effect on the people's awareness of the obligatory and discretionary functions.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the awareness of AMC was low in both the localities on Composition of AMC, names of members, obligatory and discretionary functions of AMC. Yet there is a significant difference in people's awareness of obligatory functions and discretionary functions between the localities at the low and high level of development. There was no difference in their awareness of the composition and names of members. The people's awareness of obligatory and discretionary functions of AMC is significantly higher in the locality at a high level of development. Gender, educational status, political party affiliations are significantly related to people's awareness. Age Group has no relationship with awareness. Female respondents have lower awareness as compared to their male counterparts. A direct relationship was found between respondent's educational status and awareness of AMC especially in the awareness of the powers of chairman, names of members, obligatory and discretionary functions. The socio-economic category has a significant effect as only the awareness on the composition and powers of chairman. All the components of people's awareness have a significant relationship.

Awareness of the people on the specific roles and functions of Aizawl Municipal Council was very low; therefore awareness generation through Mizo cable channels and newspaper networks will help the people become more aware of urban governance. Periodical dissemination of information on AMC will also help the people to become more aware and it will ensure transparency and accountability in the works undertaken by AMC. The quality of urban basic services needs to be enhanced manifold.

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