

Press Note for 11th August 2025 Rally and Hunger Strike against the privatization of hospitals Mumbai

“Aspatal Bachao, Nijikaran Hatao” Kriti Samiti organised a rally and hunger strike on 11th August 2025 to oppose a series of anti-people decisions of the Maharashtra government and BMC to privatise critical public hospitals and attached public health services in Mumbai. These include the Lallubhai Compound Multi-Speciality Hospital and Shatabdi Hospital, both of which are located in the under-resourced M-East Ward, and whose tenders have already been floated. The Samiti, which consists of 25+ organisations including residents groups, people's collectives, unions, NGOs, health rights groups, and political parties, alongside the residents of M-East ward, previously have protested against these tenders and the BMC's Mumbai-wide intention to privatise public health at the M-East Ward Office on 7th July 2025.

This time the Samiti organised a rally and hunger strike at Maharashtra Nagar Maternity Home on 11th August 2025 in continuation of its fight against the privatisation of hospital and public healthcare systems. The additional intention of this rally was to shed light on the condition of the government Maternity Homes in M-East Ward and raise a demand for their immediate proper functioning. The rally started from Cheetah Camp Maternity Home at 11:30 am and ended at Maharashtra Nagar Maternity Home, the rally was joined by over 100 residents of Cheetah Camp and Maharashtra Nagar. At Maharashtra Nagar Maternity Home 20+ members from the Samiti sat on a one day hunger strike and 250 people joined in solidarity to draw light to the state of government maternity homes. More than 20 organisations were present at the protest site in support. This show of strength forced the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) of M-East Ward to come speak with the people. MOH addressed the demands of the people and expressed concern over the pertinent issues raised and has assured the people and the Samiti of a meeting with the AMC and DMC of Health in the coming 10 days to address the demands. With this win, the protest and hunger strikes were concluded.

At the site of protest, tributes were given to families who have lost members of their family due to the worsened conditions and the lack of access to public health systems. There is a serious shortage of doctors, nurses and facilities in BMC hospitals. More than half of the women coming to small hospitals like Shahji Nagar and Deonar Maternity are sent directly to Sion or Rajawadi, many in critical conditions. Many patients die in the rush of referrals due to lack of timely treatment. For those who get admitted, the cost of travel, medicines, lab tests and food puts the family in debt in just a few days. The ICUs, NICUs are non-operational in many hospitals and maternity homes due to non-appointment of experienced staff. At this juncture the inoperation of a Maharashtra Nagar Maternity Home is critical to the health of mothers and children in M-East Ward.

The M-East Ward is already the worst-performing health zone in Mumbai. Though it houses 6.7% of the city's population, it accounted for 16% of maternal deaths in 2021. Over half of the children are malnourished, and TB cases have risen 300% between 2014 and 2023. Respiratory illnesses are rampant due to proximity to Deonar Dumping Ground and SMS Biowaste Plant. It recorded 9 of every 100 deaths in Mumbai related to asthma (9.16%), as per BMC data in 2023. Shockingly, life expectancy here is just 39 years, compared to 56.8 in Mumbai and 63.7 nationally.

The majority of the citizens of the M-East division live in slums, and do not even have a regular nutritious food supply. In this context, effective government public health services become a matter of life and death. However, at present, only one major municipal hospital and 18 clinics are functioning in the division, which are very inadequate compared to the needs of the region.

BMC and Maharashtra Govt are responsible for causing this unacceptable situation, and they are increasingly pushing for further privatisation of hospitals and public healthcare services in Mumbai.

Six major hospitals of Mumbai are being handed over to private operators, including the 580-bed Shatabdi Hospital and 410-bed Lallubhai Compound Hospital. The Maharashtra Nagar Maternity Home was constructed and finished using public money 3 years ago but has not yet opened to the public because the government has not yet found a contractor to buy it! In all other hospitals, X-ray, MRI and lab facilities are being given to contractors. All the posts from Ayah, Maushi to doctor and nurse are being kept on contract. To add further to the hurt of the public, BMC has made its intentions clear to add Rajawadi Hospital in Ghatkopar to the list of public hospitals being privatised. These tenders are being pushed as “Civic Health Collaboration Models” rather than ‘Public-Private Partnership’ (PPP) by the BMC to circumvent its true goal of selling public resources for private profit. Since the win of the Municipal Workers Unions in Bhagwati Hospital in stalling the privatization of the hospital, BMC is now attempting a back-door entry by privatising certain key health services within the hospital like Hemodialysis Centre, Sonology services, the entire cardiology department with cath lab facilities, MRI and CT scan facilities, and even a blood bank for patients requiring transfusions.

The rally was organised to highlight the oncoming crisis that is going to fall on every single working class person and their family in Mumbai if the wishes of BMC to privatise hospitals is allowed to be fulfilled. This is an urgent call to all organisations, sangathans, NGOs, political parties, and people’s groups to join this committee’s fight for the right to health and against the privatization of hospitals. The citizens of Mumbai will not tolerate the government playing with their lives for the sake of profit.

Our demands raised today were:

1. Maharashtra Nagar Prasuti Griha should be started immediately and recruitment should be done on all posts immediately.
2. Immediate recruitment should be done in vacant posts of Shahji Nagar (Cheeta Camp), Deonar and Shivajinagar Maternity Home and all maternity homes of the city. Pediatric ICU (NICU) should be restored in all these hospitals immediately.
3. The plan to run Shatabdi Hospital, Lallubhai Compound Hospital and all BMC hospitals in Public Private Partnership (PPP) model should be cancelled immediately.
4. The prescribed posts of all hospitals in the city should be brought up to the standards of Salim Merchant Committee and the recruitment process for all vacant posts should be started in 30 days.
5. A board should be clearly put up in all government hospitals, which should clearly state that no patient will be denied treatment in the absence of an Aadhar card or any other document.
6. A comprehensive plan should be made to improve the services of all government hospitals in the city. The Municipal Corporation should make a public declaration that every person will get all the necessary health services as a right - no one will be denied treatment.
7. A "Grievance Redressal Meeting" should be held every week with the Health Officer of the Department to hear and resolve complaints related to all the hospitals and dispensaries of the Department.

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