

The Prayer Hall Services and Maintenance Trust

Registration No. E – 31041 (Mumbai) dated 13-03-2015

C/o The WZO Trust Funds,
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August 31, 2020

File Ref: E-24

**Mr. Jehangir Gai,
Mumbai.**

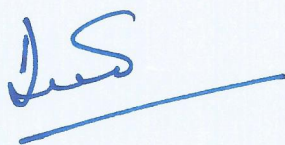
By E-Mail to: jehangir_gai@hotmail.com

Dear Mr. Gai,

1. I am addressing this communication to you on behalf of The Prayer Hall Services and Maintenance Trust (the PHS&MT), in response to your email dated 28th August 2020.
2. By your What's App messages sent to the undersigned on 3rd August 2020, and your email dated 5th August 2020, you alleged that community members who opted to make use of the Prayer Hall at the Worli Crematorium, were being compelled to make payment for the entire first four day prayer ceremonies for a deceased member, even if they wanted only one or certain specific prayers performed.
3. By our emails dated 3rd August 2020 and 5th August 2020, we informed you that:
 - a. The Prayer Hall is owned by the BMC, and is meant for gratis use by members of all communities;
 - b. The PHS&MT does not have any kind of proprietary or other rights over the Prayer Hall;
 - c. The next of kin / family members of a deceased person are free to directly coordinate with the BMC for using the Prayer Hall, and are also free to appoint priests of their choice for performing the obsequies;



- d. In furtherance of its object of providing assistance to those who want it, the PHS&MT has appointed Er. Framroze Mirza to act as a coordinator which requires him to receive calls from persons who wish to have the obsequies of a deceased family member performed at the Prayer Hall and to facilitate the same, which includes arranging for an ambulance or hearse, preparing the Prayer Hall, arranging for the various items required for the ceremonies such as flowers, fruits, etc. and assisting with documentation required by the municipal authorities;
- e. Er. Mirza's scope of work also includes ensuring the maintenance, cleanliness and upkeep of the Prayer Hall;
- f. Er. Mirza is himself also a practicing priest who is willing to perform prayer ceremonies at the Prayer Hall and does so for families who either do not have a priest or whose priest is not willing to perform prayer ceremonies at the Prayer Hall;
- g. The PHS&MT has over the years provided guidance in terms of the maximum amount which Er. Mirza or the priests who work with him at the Prayer Hall may charge in respect of various prayer ceremonies, so as to ensure some sort of parity between what is charged at the Prayer Hall and by other priests performing similar ceremonies at Doongerwadi or in any Agiary or Atash Behram, for the benefit of community members;
- h. Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, Er. Mirza and the priests who work with him at the Prayer Hall were providing the option of conducting even a single prayer ceremony;
- i. During normal times, most Agiaries and Atash Behrams refused to perform the first four days' prayers for persons who had opted for a system of disposal of the body other than Dokhmenashini;
- j. In the current scenario, however, the High Priests have issued a dispensation permitting Agiaries and Atash Behrams to conduct the first four days' prayers for persons who were compelled by law to opt for cremation / burial since these are the only options for persons who have died of Covid 19;
- k. Consequently, many families opted to get only the Geh Sarna ceremony performed at the Prayer Hall / in its parking lot and had



the remainder of the first four days' prayers performed in Agiaries or Atash Behrams of their choice;

- l. However, the Agiaries or Atash Behrams do not send priests for performing such Geh Sarna;
 - m. Er. Mirza and the priests who pray with him at the Prayer Hall are of the view that since they are putting themselves at risk each time they conduct a prayer ceremony at the Prayer Hall or in its parking lot, while the pandemic continues they will perform all the ceremonies for the first four days or none at all;
 - n. It is, of course, open for community members who do not wish to avail of their service to bring any priest/s of their choice to carry out the Geh Sarna and / or other ceremony.
4. The above sufficiently clarified the issues raised by you.
 5. However, by your email dated 28th August 2020 you have now sought to state that when your mother in law passed away on 15th March 2019, you were informed that for use of the Prayer Hall you would have to pay the then prevailing rate for all the first four day prayer ceremonies, irrespective of whether you opted to get all the ceremonies performed or not. You have further stated that on inquiring about getting a cremation performed without having any ceremony whatsoever, you were informed that you would have to directly contact the BMC and that the Prayer Hall would not be made available. You claim that there is exploitation being committed at the Prayer Hall and that community members have all along been forced to pay for the entire first four day prayer ceremonies.
 6. First and foremost we stand by and reiterate all that has been stated in our emails dated 3rd and 5th August 2020.
 7. Secondly we must state that we find it more than a bit surprising that you are today now for the first time seeking to rake up something that allegedly transpired on 15th March 2019 i.e. almost a year and a half back. This is in view of the fact that your narration of that event is directly contradictory to what has been taking place at the Prayer Hall since its inception in the year 2015.

Since September 2015 till March 31, 2020, funerals of 387 community members have taken place at the Prayer Hall. In 60 such cases, upon request of the family members of the deceased only the Paidast (Geh Sarna) ceremony has been performed, and not the entire first four day



ceremonies. In these 60 cases, the families of the deceased have been charged only for the ceremony performed and not for the entire first four day ceremonies.

It will also be pertinent to mention that as per data received from the Priests performing ceremonies at the Prayer Hall, there have been between September 2015 till March 31, 2020 a total of 97 instances (including 60 mentioned above) where selective prayers have been opted to be performed by the family members of the deceased instead of all the four days ceremonies, which too have been done without charging for the entire four day ceremonies.

This puts paid to your allegation that community members are being forced to pay for the entire first four day ceremonies at the Prayer Hall. That is why we find your belated claim about what you were informed in March 2019 hard to accept.

8. We vehemently deny that members of our community are being exploited at the Prayer Hall.
9. The PHS&MT has repeatedly published the maximum rates per ceremony which should be charged by priests at the Prayer Hall as a guideline. We have not been informed by anyone that though they have only had the Geh Sarna / Paidast ceremony performed they have had to pay for the entire first four day ceremonies. For your benefit, we are reproducing the last published rates which have been provided to the community as a guideline as to what is the maximum amount per ceremony that should be charged:

No.	Amount	Types of Ceremonies
1	6,000/=	For Geh Sarna. This ceremony will be performed only between sunrise and sunset.
2	10,000/=	For 2 / 3 Sarosh no karda that are performed after sunset.
3	11,000/=	For Uthamna performed 3rd day in the afternoon.

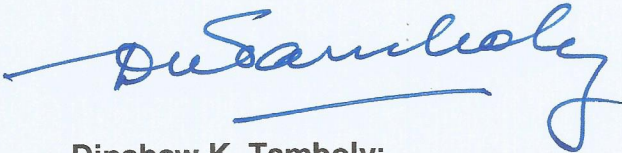


4	15,000/=	For early morning Uthamna and Dahm Yazad & Afarngan performed on the 4th day.
5	6,000/=	To be paid directly to the Co-ordinator towards incidental expenses that are incurred, irrespective of the days or ceremonies performed.
	48,000/=	TOTAL of columns 1 to 5

10. We trust that the above amply clarifies all the issues which you have raised thus far.

11. We hope wiser counsel prevails, but we will not hesitate to defend the trust, including by taking necessary legal action, if any irresponsible or incorrect statements are made in the public domain.

Very Sincerely,



**Dinshaw K. Tamboly;
Trustee**