

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF MUMBAI

THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL BODY MEETING (SGM) HELD ON SATURDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER 2024

A] The Special General Body Meeting of the Society was held on Saturday, 9th November 2024, at 3.30 p.m. in the Durbar Hall of the Society. **Prof. Vispi Balaporia**, President of the Society, presided at the meeting.

A1 The following members were present:

1. Mr. Arun S.
2. Mr. Ramesh S. Bandre
3. Mr. Biplov M. Belel
4. Ms. Vijayanthi M. Chakravarthy
5. Dr. Nasreen Fazalbhoy
6. Mr. Vivek V. Ganpule
7. Mr. Neel G. Helekar
8. Dr. Leela B. Jois
9. Mr. Umang A. Kale
10. Ms. Madhavi G. Kamat
11. Mr. Digamber L. Kamble
12. Dr. Vishnu K. Kanhere
13. Mr. Kumar Ketkar
14. Mrs. Meenal E. Kshirsagar
15. Mr. Ashutosh H. Kashyap
16. Mr. Manoj V. Kulkarni
17. Mr. Surendra N. Kulkarni
18. Mr. Joy Thomas Kuriappilly
19. Dr. Yasmeen Lukmani
20. Ms. Santoshee Mishra
21. Mr. Ajit Nair
22. Dr. Shehernaz Nalwalla
23. Mr. Nobby Pariyaram
24. Prof. Suraj A. Pandit
25. Ms. Renu Parekh
26. Mr. C.M. Paulsil
27. Dr. Kunda P.N.
28. Mr. Pulind Samant
29. Mr. Anil Sawant
30. Prof. Mangala Sirdeshpande
31. Mr. Kiran Shelar
32. Prof. Usha R Vijailakshmi
33. Mr. Dhairya K. Vyas
34. Mr. Sunil M. Bhirud (ASM Staff Representative)

A2 At the outset, the President, Prof. Vispi Balaporia, called the meeting to order since more than 25 members were present, thus satisfying the rule pertaining to a quorum of 25 members being present for commencing the meeting. She then requested the Hon. Secretary to take over the proceedings of the meeting.

- B Item No. 1 was taken up.
Item No. 1: To pass the minutes of the 220th AGM held on Saturday, 28th September 2024.
- B1 Before the minutes could be passed, Mr. Pulind Samant stated that he had something to say with regard to 7a(i) of the minutes. He asked that when only six names had been announced for Honorary Fellows of the Society, how come seven names have appeared in the minutes. The Hon. Secretary clarified the matter by explaining that inadvertently the name of Mr. Arvind Parekh had been left out. His name was Proposed by Ms. Renu Parekh and Seconded by Prof. Usha R Vijailakshmi. To this Mr. Pulind Samant said that it was his right as a member to ask for an explanation and added that this inadvertent error should have been mentioned in the minutes. He also regretted that for the past years too many things were happening “inadvertently.”
- B2 It was suggested by Mr. Surendra Kulkarni that it would be in order if the name of Arvind Parekh was added in italics.
- Proposed by Mr. Surendra Kulkarni**
Seconded by Ms. Madhavi Kamat
- B3 Thereafter, the minutes of the 220th AGM held on Saturday, 28th September 2024 were approved and confirmed.
- C Item No. 2 was taken up.
Item No. 2:
To receive and adopt the Annual Report of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai for the year 2023-2024 and the Financial Review of the Society for 2023-2024.
- C1 The Annual Report of the Society for the year 2023-2024 and the Financial Review of the Society for the year 2023-2024 was placed before the House.
- C2 The President stated that the Annual Report placed before the AGM had been passed by the Managing Committee. Once it is approved by the General Body, it will be sent to the Ministry of Culture for placing before the Parliament.
- C3 At this point, Mr. Surendra Kulkarni stated that he had gone through the Annual Report and since the Managing Committee had already passed it the House was satisfied. He proposed that the Annual Report be passed by the AGM.
- C4 **The report was thus proposed by Mr. Surendra Kulkarni and seconded by Mr. Vishnu Kanhere. The Annual Report of the Society for the year 2023-2024 and the Financial Review of the Society for the year 2023-2024 was duly approved by the House.**
- D **The President then thanked the members for taking the trouble of attending on a Saturday afternoon and declared that the meeting was over.**

- D1 The Hon. Secretary intervened to say that members have come from far and wish to discuss certain matters. Mr. Kulkarni reiterated that the meeting was over. He added that the minutes have been passed and approved by the House hence further discussions cannot take place. The President also pointed out that the Annual Report had been sent out several days earlier by email to all the members and they could have made their suggestions earlier.
- D2 A long discussion and debate ensued as to whether the meeting should be declared to be over or not.
- D3 The Hon. Secretary once again intervened that people should be allowed to speak. To this Mr. Suraj Pandit remarked that you cannot have double standards. The Presiding Officer is the President and the CEO cannot appeal to the AGM. The Hon. Secretary specified that she should have the right to speak as the CEO and also as an ordinary member.
- D4 Ms. Kunda P.N. suggested that actually the entire Annual Report should be read before the House. However, she was told by the President and Mr. Surendra Kulkarni that this is never done. The President appealed several times to the members to keep calm and speak one at a time.
- D5 Ms. Renu Parekh said that even if the Annual Report had been sent by email and members had time to send in their suggestions and objections, they still had the right to discuss these matters in the AGM. Ms. Vijayanthi Chakravarthy was of the same opinion. Mr. Pulind Samant once again said that the members were not attentive when the Annual Report was suddenly passed and adopted and hence, they must be given a chance to discuss it.
- D6 Mr. Paulsil said that at such a meeting the House should be told about all the achievements of the ASM during the past year and its goals and objectives and the vision for the future should also be defined. Unfortunately, this was not done. He added that the meeting had been summarily ended.
- D7 Ms. Renu Parekh said that she agreed with Mr. Paulsil that members should be allowed to speak. She once again reiterated that the AGM came to closure in 10 minutes. This was not correct.
- D8 Mr. Ajit Nair referred to Rule No. 12 of the byelaws and said that if the Agenda is incomplete and some items require to be discussed, the meeting as per our By-laws could be reopened and continued. Mr. S. Arun said that no meeting can continue like this. He suggested a mutually acceptable solution. He further said that the AGM should be a forum for people to express their views. He also pointed out that this was the last meeting of the AGM. Mr. Arun again said that people can ask questions and the Chair can give answers but without discussion.
- D9 At this point, Ms. Renu Parekh remarked that the only three people who wanted the meeting to end within a few minutes were the three newly elected members. She said that the newly elected members insisted that the meeting be over. Someone from the House said that she is passing judgement on others and

that this should not be done. The President said that the aspersions cast on members cannot be accepted.

- D10 The President further told the House that she is now withdrawing her earlier statement and the discussion can take place but it has to come to an end.
- D11 The President once again reminded the House that the Ministry of Culture has sent a reminder for copies of the Annual Report as they are required to be placed before the Parliament.
- D12 Mr. Anil Sawant said that he had two points to make. He spoke of the MGL project on page 13. He pointed out that major flaws in the project had been mentioned. He wanted to know which were the major flaws. He also wondered how the Manging Committee could not identify these flaws earlier.
- D13 The Hon. Secretary explained that this MGL project required the shifting of many books outside the Library and there were many problems and therefore the process of shifting was not carried out.
- D14 Mr. Anil Sawant also referred to the Cover Page of the Annual Report where the Asiatic Society is referred to as a Charitable Trust as well as a Library.
- D15 Mr. Kanhere explained that ours is a Trust and the ASM is incorporated as a Trust and registered with the Charity Commissioner and therefore it will appear in the Annual Report as a Public Trust. Dr. Shehernaz Nalwalla requested members to please go through the website of the Chairity Commissioner where it shows only one registration of 1954. She also added that it was our member, Ms. Sushama V. Dabak who had said that there were two Registrations. Dr. Nalwalla added that on the Website of the Charity Commissioner, the Library Registration “stands Cancelled” and only the Society Registration stands on the website of the Charity Commissioner.
- D16 Mr. Pulind Samant said that he wants to refer to the first point under Action Taken Report where it was clearly mentioned that the extra racks purchased would be put to good use. This assurance had been given but nothing had been done about it.
- D17 The Hon. Secretary explained to Mr. Samant that she and the President had gone through the premises of the ASM and found that many shelves were in a delapidated condition in the Research Room and other places within the ASM. She added that she had contacted Mr. Shetty of M/s. Compress Book Shelving System and asked him if they can make a framework to accommodate the extra shelves. The Hon. Secretary further clarified that we could not carry out this plan to put these extra shelves to good use due to a dearth of finance. The Hon. Secretary assured the House that when the Recurring Grant is received from the Government of Maharashtra, a certain amount will be allocated for infrastructure and she guaranteed that the needful would be done. Ms. Dabak pointed out that the Hon. Secretary could not take the decision on her own. But the Hon. Secretary clarified that she had taken the permission of the Managing Committee in this regard.

- D18 Mr. Pulind Samant further said that the Library Administration Committee had issued a Whitepaper which had been answered by the Hon. Secretary and that he had it in his possession in response to the RTI filed by him. He further said that this should have been mentioned in the Annual Report.
- D19 The Hon. Secretary clarified that the White Paper could not feature in the Annual Report as it was not ready at that time. She further said that she had already given a detailed reply to Mr. Pulind Samant's letters to the BMC, Charity Commissioner, BMC, etc. where this matter of extra shelves was explained. So actually, the White Paper was redundant since her letter clearly answered the queries in the White Paper. But since many members insisted that she answer the White Paper she filled in the details and submitted it.
- D20 Dr. Shehernaz Nalwalla pointed out that in the last AGM of 2023, she had apologized for the extra shelves which were inadvertently ordered. She added that unfortunately the President and the Hon. Secretary had not recorded this apology in the minutes. The Hon. Secretary answered this statement by saying that this was done so that there should be no mention of her name anywhere. She should actually be grateful to the Hon. Secretary and the President for the same instead of blaming them for omitting her statement in the minutes of the AGM.
- D21 Dr. Shehernaz. Nalwalla said that 50% of the racks could be used. Mr. Joy Thomas added that nevertheless it was a waste of money.
- D22 Mr. Surendra Kukarni also specified that in case this money had been earmarked for the purchase of Mobile racks nothing else could be bought with the same amount.
- D23 The President intervened and firmly said that this matter had been discussed several times and put an end to the entire discussion about the Shelves.
- D24 Mr. Pulind Samnat said that the Staff Placement Committee had not even met once during the entire year. He asked for an explanation.
- D25 Prof. Usha Vijailakshmi clarified that it was a timebound Committee and a lot of work had been done and that work was almost over. They did not send the required information to Mr. Pulind Samant as they did not have his WhatsApp number. Dr. Shehernaz Nalwalla said that there was some confusion and misunderstanding since in this Committee there were only 4 members and 2 staff members. She said that there were two distinct Committees. The Hon. Secretary added that the files had been duly checked and verified. Only two had not been done and these had also been completed under the Chairmanship of Prof. Usha Vijayalakshmi. She explained that in many files the staff members had not been given the increment that they should have got and this should be looked into. Prof Usha Vijailakshmi reiterated that a lot of work was done by the Staff Placement Committee and that its findings had to be placed before the Managing Committee before any concrete decision was taken.
- D26 At this point, the Staff Representative, Mr. Sunil Bhirud addressed his query to the Staff Placement Committee. He regretted that the staff had not been given

a Service Book in spite of repeated requests. This was a wrong decision to refuse a staff member a Service Book. He added that he had 32 years of service with no Service Book and the Placement Committee did not look into this matter. Prof. Usha R Vijailakshmi said that this matter had to be discussed and resolved.

- D27 The question of the meeting having been concluded much earlier was once again raised by Mr. Surendra Kulkarni and Mr. V.V. Ganpule. The Hon Secretary again stated that we had to give members time for discussion. The same view was repeated and emphasized by Ms. Vaijayanthi M. Chakravarthy.
- D28 Questions were raised as to why the Staff Welfare Committee had not met during the year. The Hon. Secretary explained that there were no funds in the Staff Welfare since the money from the loans that was returned was not put back into the Staff Welfare Fund. Hence no meeting could be held. However, Mr. Bhalchandra Patil, one of our staff members, had been given the necessary loan for medical expenses. She also added that three members – Mrs. Meenal Kshirsagar, Adv. Sanjay Kher and the Hon. Secretary herself, had put Rs.50,000/- each into the Staff Welfare Fund. Besides other matters, this money could be used for helping the staff for matters like their children's education and medical expenses. She appealed to the House to contribute generously to this fund. The President cautioned the Hon. Secretary that this matter had to be first discussed in the Managing Committee before it came into force.
- D29 Mr. Anil Sawant referred to page 83 of the Annual Report regarding the Journal Committee. He was surprised that the names of those members who had never attended a single meeting were included in the list of members. He added that their names should not be there. However, the President clarified the matter by explaining that the Committee was formed with all these members and hence their names had been retained.
- D30 At this point, the President stated that all matters had been discussed with the members and, since no other item remained to be discussed, this SGM could be concluded.
- D31 The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

Prof. Vispi R. Balaporia
President

Prof. Mangala R. Sirdeshpande
Hon. Secretary