

RAJESH KUMAR

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From left: Ashish Kothari, Sujit Patwardhan and Neelima Mysore

Will they vote and why?

"Voting is an important act of participating in a democratic process," feels Sujit Patwardhan, honorary secretary, Parisar. Voting is a duty every citizen has to perform, says Neelima Mysore, member, Model Colony Parisar Sudharna Samiti. While Ashish

Where's green in the political canvas?



MY VOTE, MY RIGHT

Kothari, founder, Kalpavriksh, agreeing on the importance of voting, adds, "People need to participate in what happens in the five years between elections-not just by voting alone."

How far does the "feel good" mantra hold true for the city's

and country's environment?

"The 'feel good' factor is a deception because for every visible cosmetic sign of 'development' like a park, there are dozens other which damage the environment. Take for instance, the increase in high rise buildings on Bhandarkar road," says Patwardhan. Limited to an urban minority,

'feel good' has not held good for the vast majority like those who are dependent on natural resources, says Kothari. "Did you know that of all the forest clearances in the last 30 years, one fourth of them occurred in the last five years," he says. In fact, Mysore goes so far as to dub it the 'feel bad' as far as the envi-

ronmental field is concerned.

Has environment made it to the agenda of political parties?

"While there has been a welcome trend not to harp on divisive issues and instead concentrate on basic needs like *kapda* and *roti*, why has no political party connected it to the environment? This issue is never addressed," asks Kothari. Environment issues get short shrift and even politicians who are known to understand green causes, during elections do not want to be seen as

WHAT THEY WANT

- ✓ Improved public transport
- ✓ Compulsory rainwater harvesting
- ✓ Pollution checks
- ✓ Open city spaces

"anti-development' feels Patwardhan. "While the Indian legislative has passed many laws to protect the environment and in fact, the state government has been given 'blanket powers' to this effect-does anyone know how to bring them into effect? Is there any cognisance of environmental crime?" asks Mysore.

What are the green city issues that need the government's urgent attention?

"Improvement in public transport will affect every aspect of the city's environment. A burgeoning yearly increase to the existing number of vehicles in the city, the increase in infrastructure like flyovers, roads in canals, river beds or hills-all of it only harms the environment," says Patwardhan, adding that the need for open spaces in the city is another neglected need.

To that, Kothari and Mysore suggest making rain water harvesting mandatory for all, checking air pollution and nurturing of trees.

AISHWARYA MAVINKURVE

What do elections 2004 mean for the city and its environment?

Greens Ashish Kothari, Sujit Patwardhan and Neelima Mysore debate on the subject