



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

# CANDIDATES ARE STILL UNDER SCRUTINY

### Times News Network

THE Public Affairs Centre (PAC) along with the Swabhimana team has not only launched a campaign to achieve a substantial increase in the voter turnout during the forthcoming BCC elections but will also conduct a post-poll assessment of the extent of bogus voting. Alongside, it will also assess the impact of the campaign on the voters' decision.

According to Poomima D G, programme associate, PAC, "Soon after the polls, a random household survey in selected polling stations is on the anvil to objectively quantify the extent of bogus voting, a phenomenon that smacks of money and muscle power for electoral gains."

One of the components of the campaign has been collecting information on the candidates. More than 27 resident associations have been

involved in the effort in 21 wards. They have been interviewing candidates to find out whether they are tax payers, whether they reside in the ward from which they are contesting, whether they possess a criminal record, their commitments for the ward, past achievements and willingness to abide by the electoral code of conduct.

### Clean Polls

The information thus collected will be widely disseminated through door-to-door distribution of leaflets and display of posters at strategic locations. Names of the candidates refusing to be interviewed will be published in the leaflets and posters.

A similar effort is being planned in association with ICE cable television

network to cover an additional 24 wards as part of the information campaign in which interviews will be aired on the cable TV network, says Poomima.

Besides, the team says it has used hoardings, advertisement panels on BMTC buses, still slides in cinema theatres and on cable TV network, posters, messages on the telephone on the day of voting, SMS messages on cell phones to increase voter turnout. There has also been a letter campaign initiated targeting about 50 schools. This involves children giving letters to their parents urging them to vote for their sake.

Roughly about 50 per cent of the wards will be covered through the various media. In 1996, the number of wards covered was eight. So the increase to 40-plus wards is seen as a big leap in terms of growing awareness and concerns of the citizens.