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NEWS

Month later, a forum to chronicle 7/11

National Knowledge Commission, varsity, others join hands to compile data to send to government

Express News Service

Mumbai, August 11: It's an avenue for all those who have been hunting for a forum to express their views on the 7/11 serial blasts.

Almost a month after Terrible Tuesday, on Thursday evening, six prominent agencies joined hands to launch MumbaiVoices, a project that aims at creating public pressure to influence government policies on disaster management.

The agencies launched a website— www.mumbaivoices.com— where citizens can post their views, experiences and answer a set of specific questions. This information will then be compiled by volunteers from **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)** and the University of Mumbai.

Conceptualised by Mumbaiites home and abroad, MumbaiVoices is a first-of-its-kind coalition comprising the National Knowledge Commission (NKC), the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, the Mumbai university's Economics Department, the Jamshetji Tata Centre for Disaster Management at TISS, Ambulance Access for All and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI).

"The questions we are raising are whether we can use technology to prevent such disasters, how can you make something happen and how can it go on to create public pressure," said NKC Chairman Sam Pitroda.

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The HHI has provided the technological support and will also bring in the perspective on how such disasters are handled elsewhere. “We will provide comparative studies from the UK so that the better techniques used here can be used in other countries,” said Mihir Bhatt from HHI.

The Economics Department will compile the information and submit the data to the State and the Centre. “The main objective is to get the voices of the people to the authorities and the people who matter so that disaster-management plans are not made in the air,” said Alka Parikh, Reader from the Economics Department.

Though the institutes could not rope in any government agency, they said they would try to do so later. When asked what if their suggestions were ignored by the government, Pitroda responded that the initiative was just a beginning. “We hope that voices are raised, and that some day, someone will respond to them,” he added.

Those who do not have access to the Internet can post their responses to PO Box 8313, Deonar, Mumbai-88 or via SMS to 9820200180.