

Shri Devendra Fadnavis
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Chief Minister's Office,
6th Floor, Mantralaya,
Mumbai 400032

20 August 2025

Via email: cm@maharashtra.gov.in

Subject: Pigeon-feeding—a humane and now necessary tradition of cultural and religious significance

Dear Hon'ble Chief Minister,

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India and our more than two million members to welcome and commend your statement that [‘abruptly shutting shelters is not a solution’](#) and that a practical way forward on the issue of pigeon feeding is necessary. Your assurance on 5 August 2025 that [controlled feeding will continue under Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation \(BMC\) supervision](#) until long-term arrangements are made is a laudable step in the right direction that we hope will be put in place. It has [since been reported](#) that the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is inviting suggestions and objections from citizens on whether pigeon feeding at designated kabutar khanas should be regulated.

Pigeon feeding is a humane tradition of cultural and religious significance and potential health risks caused by pigeons are hugely overblown. For ease, I have attached a factsheet with research in this regard, that also includes a description of a tried-and-tested humane solution. (Annexure 1) Also attached, please find a notarised testimony by the founder of PETA India, Ms Ingrid Newkirk, who is the former Chief of Zoonotic Disease for the Department of Health and Human Services of the Washington DC government. In it, she explains how the disease risk from casual contact with pigeons is extremely rare. (Annexure 2)

An [RTI response](#) from Mumbai's three biggest civic-run hospitals shows that only 0.3% of respiratory illness cases in 2024 were linked to pigeon exposure. And medical literature on 'hypersensitivity pneumonitis' (HP) shows it can occur from repeatedly breathing in bacteria, mold, or chemicals in the environment, and harmful substances may be found in [multiple sources](#) like air conditioners, humidifiers, contaminated foods, metalwork fluids, hardwood dusts, hay or grain, and hot tubs – not just bird droppings or feathers. Scientific reviews also note that identifying the exact source is usually challenging, [there is no single diagnostic gold standard](#), and [urban air pollution](#) is linked to higher rates of HP.

What's more, researchers who [studied six decades of epidemiological research](#) concluded the risk of disease transmission from free-living pigeons to humans is 'very low, even for humans involved in occupations that bring them into close

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contact with nesting sites’ as published by *Journal of Infection*. [The University of Edinburgh reports](#) pigeons are ‘resistant to infection’ of bird flu indicating ‘that they have an inherent ability to prevent virus from [entering cells or spreading](#)’. Public-health authorities point instead to poultry farms, live-animal markets and slaughterhouses as the genuine bird flu and other zoonotic threat.

Mumbai’s *kabutarkhanas* are century-old and provide countless citizens – many of them senior feeders – comfort and spiritual fulfilment from offering a handful of grain to these gentle birds each day. Moreover, pigeons that have been fed at *kabutarkhanas* for generations will starve to death without their known, reliable food source.

Compassion toward animals is not merely sentimental; it is a constitutional duty under Article 51A(g) and a statutory requirement under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. Criminalising or dismantling traditional *kabutarkhanas* risks violating both the letter and spirit of these provisions and sends an unintended signal that compassion is expendable when inconvenient or real estate interests get in the way.

PETA India, therefore, suggests a three-step plan to satisfy public health concerns while maintaining tradition and bird welfare. First, we suggest to designate specific feeding hubs at existing *kabutarkhanas*, clearly posting reasonable feeding hours, requiring only pigeon-friendly food and bans on littering, bread and plastic. Second, sanitation workers should perform regular wash-downs and sweeps of each site, and nutrient-rich droppings could be routed to municipal composting facilities, turning waste into valuable fertiliser at virtually no cost. Third, a multilingual public-education push can help citizens understand that the true risk of catching a disease from pigeons is virtually nil, thereby encouraging harmony between human and bird Mumbaikars.

We would also like to bring to your attention that [a globally recognised humane population control method](#) has shown measurable success across European cities and is highly suitable for Indian metros like Mumbai. This [Pigeon Control Advisory Service \(PiCAS\)](#) model can be integrated into our proposed plan. A more detailed study is annexed with this letter as Annexure 1.

Under this model, dovecotes (artificial nesting and roosting houses) are constructed near designated feeding areas to attract pigeons away from sensitive sites and enable monitoring. In addition, eggs laid in dovecotes are systematically replaced with dummy eggs. This can be done by trained municipal staff or volunteers. This humane approach allows long-term population control without cruelty.

We further recommend pigeon-proofing key public and private buildings through the use of non-lethal deterrents such as reflective bird repellent tape. While window mesh is suitable, netting is not advised as birds often get entangled in them. The municipal corporation can lead by example and provide expert support to help incentivise building owners.

PETA India would be pleased to provide educational creatives and to work with the government on pro-pigeon initiatives in any way. We also urge that you direct the adoption of this PiCAS-inspired humane management model to the BMC and other local bodies facing similar concerns.

Taking steps to simultaneously protect public health and pigeon welfare will show that Mumbai leads with both strategy and compassion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Atharva Deshmukh', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Atharva Deshmukh
Campaigns Coordinator
PETA India