

# You can be this, Sion

## SEWREE HOSPITAL

The Sewree TB Hospital has roped in a private firm to maintain hygiene on its premises. The result appears to be sparkling clean



One of the 13 wards at the Sewree TB Hospital. All wards are cleaned twice a day...

## SION HOSPITAL



SACHIN HARALKAR

... meanwhile at the Sion Hospital, patients have to put up with tattered beds, unhygienic surroundings, and even cleaning bowls pushed under the beds

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The civic-run Sewree Tuberculosis (TB) Hospital could be an example to follow for the public hospitals in the city in terms of cleanliness. Sparkling clean corridors and wards, whitewashed ceilings, scrubbed fans and lights, and well-maintained washrooms have become a norm at the hospital – the only exclusive medical facility for tuberculosis patients in Asia – at a time when most public hospitals in Mumbai are struggling to maintain even the most basic hygiene standards.

The hospital is kept spic-and-span by a team of 100 workers from Bharat Vikas Group (BVG) – a private firm that specialises in maintaining office premises – who take shifts to ensure a team is present at the hospital 24x7. BVG took over the hospital's maintenance last month, on a one-year contract.

The condition of the hospital's

corridors, toilets and wards is a massive contrast compared to another BMC-run facility – the Sion Hospital – which is one of the biggest public hospitals in the state. Mumbai Mirror had reported around two weeks ago the plight of the Sion Hospital, where the filth could make even the most hardened municipal worker retch ('We are soo soo sorry', MM, March 5).

The Sion Hospital has a cleaning staff of 500, but the hospital's corridor walls and corners are stained with paan masala spit, the hallways are home to stray cats and dogs, and empty alcohol bottles lay strewn on the premises.

The Sewree Hospital cleanliness story, and the lack of hygiene at the Sion Hospital, both point to the need of a robust public-private partnership. Dr Suleman Merchant, acting Dean of the Sion Hospital, blamed the rampant absenteeism of the Class IV employees for the mess. Merchant compared the hospital to a 'mini Kumbh Mela' while referring to the patient load.

The Sewree Hospital manage-



A worker cleaning the tubelights at the Sewree Hospital

ment said that the facility would have gone the Sion Hospital way had they depended on its cleanliness staff.

"We are a 1,000-bed facility and have around 600 Class IV employees, but still struggled to maintain basic levels of hygiene. The partnership with a private firm has allowed us to use the Class IV employees for work such as changing patients' clothes, cleaning urination pots, handling wheelchairs, etc. A lot of this work had to be previously handled by the patients' relatives," a doctor from the Sewree Hospital said.

The hospital management said that roping in a private firm to maintain cleanliness costs less than the combined salaries of the Class IV employees. Dr Rajendra Nanaware, medical superintendent of the hospital, said, "There has been a marked

improvement in the level of cleanliness at the hospital. Toilets and basins no longer stink, paan masala stains have disappeared from the walls... The firm provides the detergent and other equipment to the cleaners," he said.

Nanaware said that the hospital is spread over 10 lakh sq ft, and BVG charges around Rs 3 crore a year to maintain the premises.

"The entire hospital is now cleaned twice a day, and the toilets every three hours. The drastic improvement in hygiene will be a big help in the treatment, as TB patients are highly susceptible to infections. Even the doctors, many of whom were wary to work at the hospital for the fear of contracting the disease, are comforted by the fact that they are working in a clean hospital," a doctor said.

Prashant Khochare from BVG, who is supervising the cleanliness work at the hospital, said the deal is simple: "We fail to deliver, they get someone else. We do a good job, our contract gets renewed." Explaining the daily drill of his team, he said, "The corridors and all the 13 wards are cleaned twice a day. Toilets are cleaned every three hours. An extra hour is allotted to cleaning the ceiling, walls, stairways, window panes, doors, lifts, fans, and lights." The cleaners have to wear gloves and masks in the wards to ensure they and the patients don't contract infections.

Additional Municipal Commissioner Sanjay Deshmukh said that roping in a private contractor will help the hospital management focus on better treatment and combating the deadlier strains of TB. Now, it's time for other public hospitals to take cue from this success story.

## THE SION HOSPITAL MESS

Mirror reported the lack of hygiene at the Sion Hospital on March 5

