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## Ulhasnagar turns 61

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On August 8, glittering Ulhasnagar—once home to the largest tsunami of gritty migrants from a hostile 1947-Pakistan—turned sixty-one. The happy residents fondly remember the dramatic journey of a tiny obscure settlement into a famous trade and business centre.



“Ulhasnagar is sheer tale of triumph of spirit. It was a dismal place in the 1940s. Since then, it has seen fast growth. More infrastructural changes are to come soon. It will turn into a top-class metro city,” promises

Kumar Ailani, the sitting BJP MLA.

For the nostalgic, tinted memories still count. “The new generation does not have any racial memory of the tragic exodus of their grandparents from their ancestral land. The past should be documented and preserved as a cultural link with the vanishing history of a wandering tribe,” believes Charu Gidwani, a young scholar who teaches English literature at RKT College.

“The anniversary reminds me of the bitter struggles of a displaced community for a better life. Their unique success story epitomizes the essential Sindhi spirit of persistence, industry and perseverance,” says Purushottam Khanchandani, a gazetted officer in a government office.

Dr Narendra Panjwani, a general practitioner, observes, “The community is closely-knit, business-oriented and very flexible. It has worked very hard. The youngsters do not have the idea of the sacrifices made by the previous generations. They were the uprooted folks.

But they could graft themselves in a foreign soil and survive in most harsh conditions. The foundation day is a tribute to them.” According to Panjwani, it was in 1949 that the foundation stone was laid by C Rajgopalachari, the first and last governor-general of

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After partition of 1947 they were located to Kalyan and the adjoining area. The homeless migrants were housed in 1178 barracks that were built on a plot of 1200 hectares for accommodating 6000 soldiers during the Second World War period. These big five shelters were called refugee camps. As it was situated on the banks of the river Ulhas, the town got named as Ulhasnagar.

The first municipal council was established on October 1, 1960. Newandram Vishindas Gurbani, the then first elected MLA, was nominated as first president of the erstwhile Ulhasnagar Municipal Council. Ulhasnagar Municipal Council was upgraded to Ulhasnagar Municipal Corporation on October 20, 1996, and Ganesh Chaudhry became the first mayor of the corporation.

“It has never stopped growing. It is the only town that has got maximum number of Sindhi population and our only home. It has given us everything. We are proud to be citizen of our dear Ulhasnagar,” says shopkeeper Chander Kumar, summing up the general sentiment. Happy birthday to a resilient town on the roll! (Local students find out how much they know about the town...pg5)

**Sources:** *Dombivli-kalyan plus*

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