

# MEDIA WATCH

## Prominence Score of Civic Issues



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# INTRODUCTION

Municipal elections were recently concluded in 29 cities across Maharashtra, including Pune, resulting in the formation of a new body of corporators in the Pune Municipal Corporation. As these elected representatives assume responsibility for governance over the next five years, it becomes crucial to equip them with a clear understanding of the city's key challenges and priorities. Effective policymaking begins with informed decision-making, grounded in evidence rather than perception alone.

This project seeks to contribute to that objective by presenting a data-driven perspective on Pune's urban issues. While there are multiple ways to identify and prioritise city concerns, this study focuses on the role of print media as a reflection of public discourse and civic attention. Three of Pune's leading newspapers were selected for analysis.

Through systematic quantification and analysis of news coverage across these newspapers, the study reveals which urban issues receive prominence and how attention is distributed among them.

This document, therefore, serves as a Media Watch study, aimed at helping newly elected corporators understand the relative weight and prominence of different urban issues. **This is a Media Watch, but not a report about the media itself; the focus remains on the city's issues and their Prominence Score as reflected in media coverage.** By translating media attention into measurable indicators, the study replaces abstract impressions with concrete data, enabling policymakers to better align governance priorities with the issues that visibly shape public discourse in the city.

We hope this study proves useful to policymakers, citizen groups, activists, and media professionals alike. With this intent, we present the study, '**Media Watch: Prominence Score of Civic Issues**'.

**Tanmay Kanitkar**  
President, Policy Research Organization

**Harshada Abhyankar**  
Director, ShodhEco

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## METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study comprises three principal components: data collection, formulation of the Prominence Score, and data analysis and interpretation.

Data collection was carried out over a one-year period, covering all editions published between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025 of the Pune editions of three leading newspapers—Sakaal, Maharashtra Times, and Loksatta. A dedicated research team systematically reviewed each issue and documented all news items relevant to the city and municipal administration. Each news item was quantified using two measurable parameters: the physical size of the news item, calculated in column-centimetres, and the page number on which the item appeared. In addition, each news item was categorised by thematic topic and further coded to indicate whether the coverage reflected a positive or negative development in relation to civic governance. The data entry process was conducted manually to ensure consistent classification and measurement standards. Physical print editions were used for measuring coverage in Sakaal, while Maharashtra Times and Loksatta editions were accessed through their official e-paper versions.

The Prominence Score was designed to estimate the relative importance accorded to various civic issues in print media coverage. Three principal factors were considered in constructing this score: the number of news items pertaining to each topic, the average size of coverage devoted to those topics, and the page position on which the news items appeared. Greater weight was assigned to coverage appearing on more prominent pages, reflecting higher visibility and potential readership impact. For this purpose, news size is measured in column centimeters (number of columns x height of the column in centimeters).

Accordingly, the Prominence Score was computed using the formula:

**Prominence Score = (Sum Size of News Items on a Given Page) × (Weight Assigned to that Page).**

The formula used for the Average Prominence Score is as follows:

**Prominence Score = (Average Size of News Items on a Given Page) × (Weight Assigned to that Page).**

The weighting framework is as follows:

Page No.	Weight Assigned
1	10
2	7
3	8
4 & 5	5
5+	3

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The weighting framework and scoring logic were developed through consultations with media professionals, academic researchers, and social sector practitioners to ensure practical relevance and methodological robustness.

The derived formula was applied to the compiled dataset to generate topic-wise prominence values. Subsequent data analysis and interpretation were undertaken based on these results to identify patterns in issue coverage and relative prominence within print media discourse.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting its findings. The analysis is confined to three newspapers published in Pune—Sakaal, Loksatta, and Maharashtra Times—and does not include other print or regional publications. The study covers news published over one year, from January 2025 to December 2025, and therefore reflects issue prominence only within this timeframe. Furthermore, only news related to the city and municipal administration has been included, while news concerning the Union and State governments has been deliberately excluded to maintain a focused perspective on local governance. The Prominence Score has been calculated solely based on news items appearing in print editions, and digital news platforms or online media coverage have not been considered. It is also acknowledged that this study represents only one approach to understanding the city’s issue landscape and should not be seen as the sole method for identifying civic priorities.



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## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 3,273 news items published across the three newspapers during the year 2025 were collected and systematically analysed. The key findings emerging from this analysis are presented below as the principal highlights of the study.

### Top 3 Topics by Number of News Reports

Topic	Number of news	Proportion
Road Infrastructure	575	17.57%
Public Infrastructure	350	10.69%
Governance	338	10.33%

### Bottom 3 Topics by Number of News Reports

Topic	Number of news	Proportion
Public Education	56	1.71%
Other (Miscellaneous)	29	0.89%
Street Lights	26	0.79%

### Top 3 Topics by Total Coverage Area (Column-cm)

Topic	Size of the news (Column-cm)	Proportion
Road Infrastructure	34,726	18.86%
Public Infrastructure	22,547	12.24%
Governance	17,308	9.40%

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### Bottom 3 Topics by Total Coverage Area (Column-cm)

Topic	Size of the news (Column-cm)	Proportion
Environment	3,121	1.69
Other (Miscellaneous)	1,426	0.77
Street Lights	1,415	0.77

### Top 3 Topics by Average Coverage per News Item (Column-cm)

Topic	Average Size of the news (Column-cm)
Public Education	64.75
Public Infrastructure	64.42
Traffic	60.39

### Bottom 3 Topics by Average Coverage per News Item (Column-cm)

Topic	Average Size of the news (Column-cm)
Governance	51.21
Solid Waste Management	49.96
Other (Miscellaneous)	49.17

### Top 3 Topics with positive Coverage

Topic	Proportion of Positive News
Tourism and Culture	82.76%
Public Education	71.43%
Public Transport	71.37%

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### Top 3 Topics with Negative Coverage

Topic	Proportion of Negative News
Traffic	70.04%
Road Safety	60.79%
Solid Waste Management	60%

### Top 3 topics by Prominence Score

Topic	Score
Road Infrastructure	2,35,471
Public Infrastructure	1,50,182
Governance	1,20,712

### Top 3 topics by Average Prominence Score

Topic	Score
Public Education	468.21
Public Infrastructure	429.09
Road Infrastructure	409.51

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## KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Infrastructure-related issues, especially **Road Infrastructure and Public Infrastructure**, dominate media coverage in terms of both the number of reports and the total coverage area, indicating their centrality in civic discourse.
- **Public Education**, despite having relatively few news items, records the **highest Average Prominence Score**, showing that when covered, it receives larger and more prominently placed coverage. It is noteworthy that among the three newspapers, Sakal provided significantly more prominent coverage to this topic than the other two, thereby pushing it to the top of the Average Prominence Score rankings.
- A clear contrast exists between **frequency and prominence** of reporting; some topics appear often but receive smaller coverage, while others appear less frequently but gain higher visibility.
- **Tourism & Culture, Public Education, and Public Transport** receive largely **positive coverage**, often linked to development initiatives and improvements.
- **Traffic, Road Safety, and Solid Waste Management** receive a higher share of **negative coverage**, suggesting persistent operational and governance challenges in these sectors.
- **Governance-related news appears frequently** but with a smaller average coverage size, indicating routine or event-driven reporting rather than detailed issue-based analysis.
- **Environmental issues remain underrepresented** in both frequency and prominence, despite their growing importance for urban sustainability.
- Month-wise patterns show **spikes in coverage during certain periods**, likely influenced by seasonal disruptions, civic incidents, or infrastructure projects.
- Media prominence appears influenced not only by structural issues but also by **events, announcements, and episodic developments**, affecting which issues receive attention.
- Overall, **infrastructure and mobility dominate media attention**, while social and environmental concerns receive comparatively less sustained focus, highlighting potential gaps between media visibility and long-term urban priorities.

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# OBSERVATIONS

## FOR THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF PUNE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

- **Road Infrastructure remains the most visible civic concern**, indicating continued public pressure for better road quality, maintenance, and coordination among agencies to prevent repeated digging and repair cycles.
- **Traffic and Road Safety emerge as major areas of dissatisfaction**, suggesting urgent need for integrated traffic management, safer road design, stricter enforcement, and improved pedestrian infrastructure.
- **Public Infrastructure projects receive extensive coverage**, indicating that citizens closely track the delivery of civic facilities; timely completion and transparency in project execution can significantly improve public trust.
- **Water Supply continues to attract high prominence**, reflecting ongoing concerns regarding supply reliability, distribution equity, and seasonal shortages, especially in rapidly expanding areas.
- **Public Transport shows a relatively positive perception**, suggesting that investments in bus services, metro connectivity, and last-mile access are yielding visible benefits, though continued expansion and service reliability remain critical.
- **Solid Waste Management and Sanitation continue to generate negative reporting**, pointing toward operational inefficiencies, landfill concerns, and gaps in segregation and processing systems that need systemic improvement.
- **Public Health receives steady attention**, highlighting the importance of strengthening urban health infrastructure, preventive care, and disease surveillance systems, particularly in densely populated zones.
- **Public Safety remains a recurring concern**, indicating the need for improved street lighting, surveillance, emergency response systems, and community policing initiatives.
- **Environmental issues receive relatively low sustained attention**, suggesting that climate resilience, urban flooding, air quality, and green space preservation may be under-prioritised despite long-term risks.

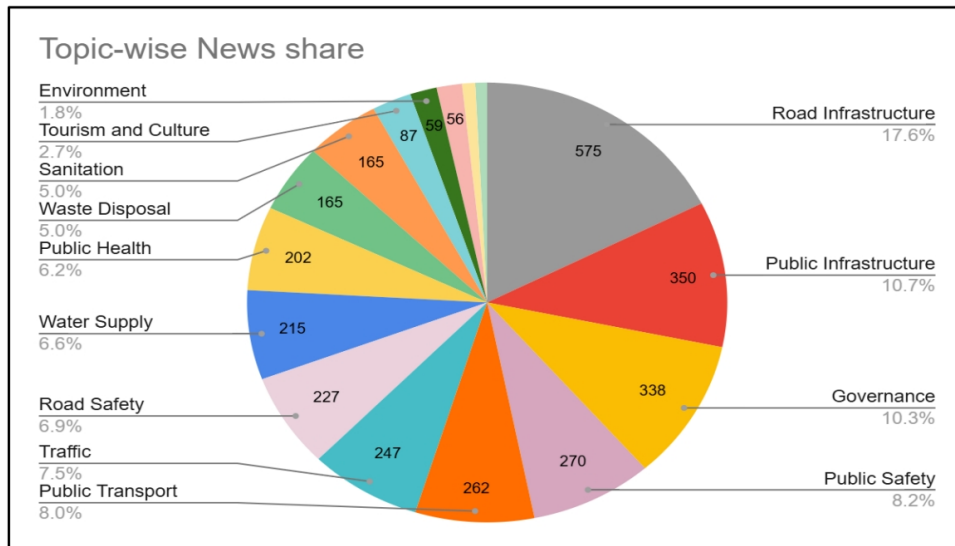


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- **Public Education receives strong prominence when reported**, indicating that improvements or crises in municipal education quickly draw attention; sustained reforms in school infrastructure, teacher availability, and learning outcomes could produce a visible public impact.
  - **Tourism and Culture coverage is largely positive**, showing potential for economic and city branding benefits if heritage conservation and cultural infrastructure are systematically supported.
  - **Street lighting, though low in coverage, directly impacts safety and mobility**, especially for women, the elderly, and night-time workers, and thus remains an important quality-of-life issue despite limited reporting.
  - Overall, **mobility, infrastructure delivery, and urban services dominate civic discourse**, suggesting policymakers should prioritise efficient service delivery while simultaneously strengthening under-addressed long-term concerns like environment, education quality, and urban resilience.

## DATA: Charts & Tables

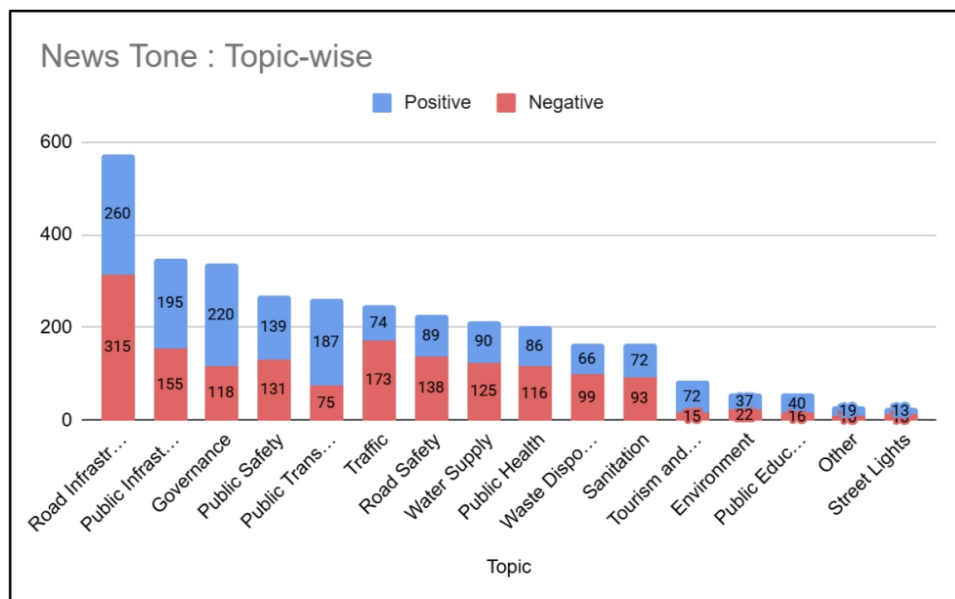
### TOPIC-WISE NEWS SHARE

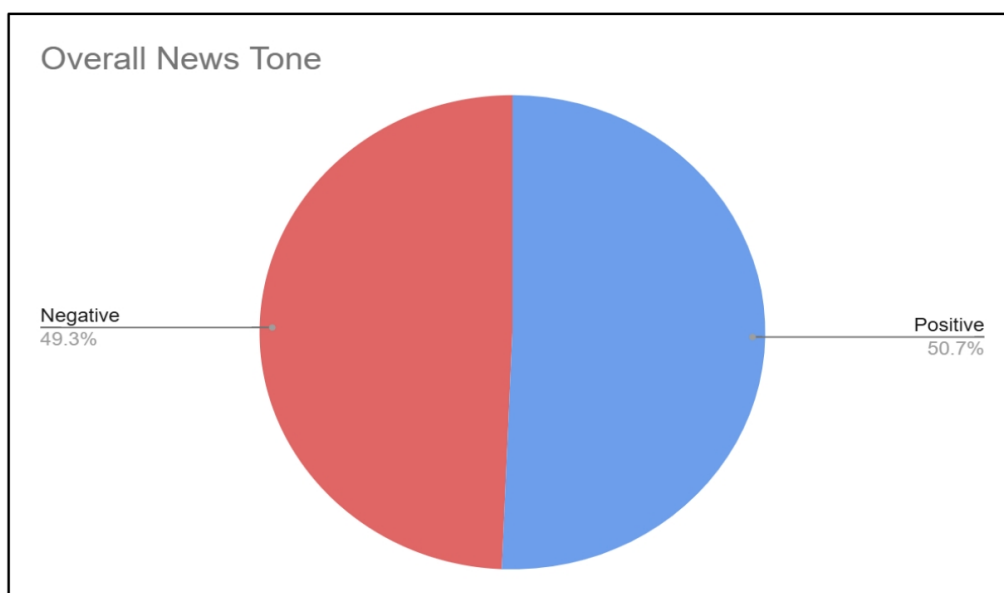
The 3,273 news items were systematically classified into 16 distinct topics.



### ALL NEWS COVERAGE WAS CATEGORISED INTO TWO TONES: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

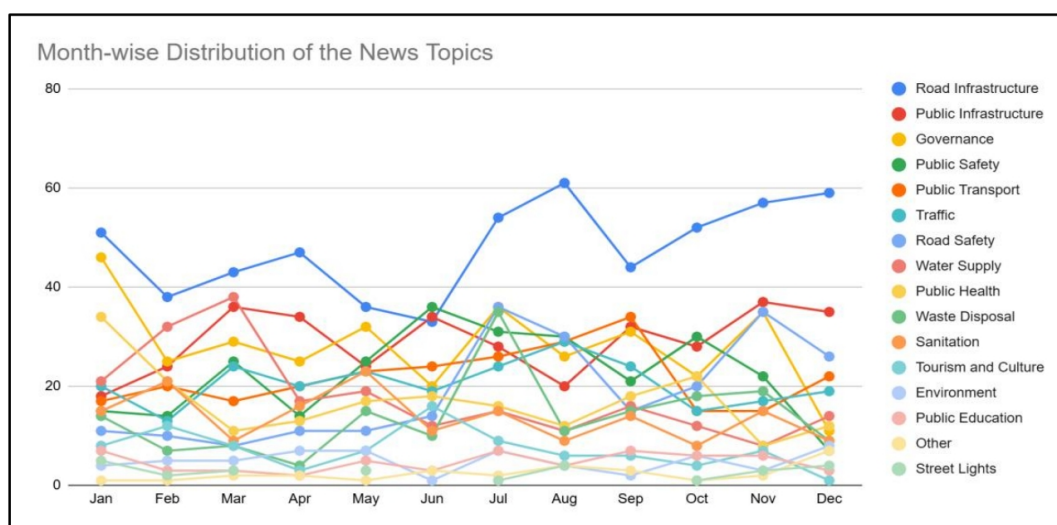
Out of the 3,273 news items analysed, 1,659 carried a positive tone, while 1,615 reflected a negative tone.





## NUMBER OF NEWS ITEMS: MONTH-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF TOPICS

It is interesting to observe how news patterns evolve, or in some cases remain unchanged, across different seasons over the course of a year.



### TOTAL SIZE OF ALL THE NEWS ITEMS (COLUMN-CM)

Topic	Loksatta	MaTa	Sakal	Grand Total
Road Infrastructure	6,437	10,986	17,303	34,726
Public Infrastructure	4,534	6,443	11,570	22,547
Governance	5,231	5,093	6,984	17,308
Traffic	3,096	4,393	7,717	15,206
Public Safety	4,562	2,603	7,353	14,518
Public Transport	2,859	6,251	4,704	13,814
Road Safety	1,769	3,335	6,851	11,955
Water Supply	2,770	4,612	4,335	11,717
Public Health	3,908	1,561	5,766	11,235
Sanitation	1,796	1,051	5,771	8,618
Solid Waste Management	1,498	2,367	4,378	8,243
Tourism and Culture	1,930	1,050	1,684	4,664
Public Education	852	444	2,330	3,626
Environment	1,638	901	582	3,121
Other	766	197	463	1,426
Street Lights	124	560	731	1,415
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>43,770</b>	<b>51,847</b>	<b>88,522</b>	<b>184,139</b>

### AVERAGE SIZE OF THE NEWS

Topic	Loksatta	MaTa	Sakal	Grand Total
Public Education	38.73	55.50	89.62	64.75
Public Infrastructure	46.27	59.66	80.35	64.42
Traffic	51.60	60.18	67.69	61.56
Road Infrastructure	55.02	52.82	69.21	60.39
Public Health	52.81	65.04	55.44	55.62
Water Supply	44.68	59.90	57.04	54.50
Street Lights	31.00	62.22	56.23	54.42
Public Safety	43.45	59.16	60.77	53.77
Tourism and Culture	45.95	95.45	49.53	53.61
Environment	54.60	56.31	44.77	52.90
Public Transport	43.98	56.83	54.07	52.73
Road Safety	50.54	43.88	59.06	52.67
Sanitation	48.54	58.39	52.46	52.23
Governance	43.23	60.63	52.51	51.21
Solid Waste Management	48.32	43.04	55.42	49.96
Other	51.07	49.25	46.30	49.17
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>47.68</b>	<b>56.05</b>	<b>61.90</b>	<b>56.26</b>



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## PROMINENCE SCORE

The Prominence Score is calculated based on the number of news items and the pages on which they appeared in the newspaper.

Topic	Loksatta	MaTa	Sakal	Grand Total
Road Infrastructure	27,275	84,893	1,23,303	2,35,471
Public Infrastructure	20,468	50,056	79,658	1,50,182
Governance	24,783	41,714	54,215	1,20,712
Traffic	13,810	31,654	55,256	1,00,720
Public Transport	13,473	50,659	35,961	1,00,093
Public Safety	19,323	20,423	54,005	93,751
Water Supply	14,426	37,629	33,639	85,694
Road Safety	9,055	26,773	46,120	81,948
Public Health	15,592	12,378	42,053	70,023
Solid Waste Management	5,649	17,316	29,818	52,783
Sanitation	6,978	7,628	38,153	52,759
Tourism and Culture	7,708	9,622	12,878	30,208
Public Education	4,740	3,742	17,738	26,220
Environment	5,436	6,999	3,996	16,431
Street Lights	522	4,064	5,282	9,868
Other	2,963	1,259	4,010	8,232
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,92,201</b>	<b>4,06,809</b>	<b>6,36,085</b>	<b>12,35,095</b>

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### AVERAGE PROMINENCE

The average prominence score is calculated based on the average size of news items and the pages on which they appear in the newspaper.

Topic	Loksatta	MaTa	Sakal	Grand Total
Public Education	215.45	467.75	682.23	468.21
Public Infrastructure	208.86	463.48	553.18	429.09
Road Infrastructure	233.12	408.14	493.21	409.51
Traffic	230.17	433.62	484.70	407.77
Water Supply	232.68	488.69	442.62	398.58
Public Transport	207.28	460.54	413.34	382.03
Street Lights	130.50	451.56	406.31	379.54
Road Safety	258.71	352.28	397.59	361.00
Governance	204.82	496.60	407.63	357.14
Public Safety	184.03	464.16	446.32	347.23
Tourism and Culture	183.52	874.73	378.76	347.22
Public Health	210.70	515.75	404.36	346.65
Solid Waste Managemen	182.23	314.84	377.44	319.90
Sanitation	188.59	423.78	346.85	319.75
Other	197.53	314.75	401.00	283.86
Environment	181.20	437.44	307.38	278.49
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>209.37</b>	<b>439.79</b>	<b>444.81</b>	<b>377.36</b>

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## WAY FORWARD

This study is envisaged not as a one-time exercise but as an ongoing effort to track and understand the evolving civic priorities reflected in media coverage. In the coming years, we intend to continue this study annually while simultaneously expanding its scope. Future editions aim to include additional newspapers that could not be incorporated in the present study, thereby enabling a broader and more representative analysis. The research team also plans to extend the analytical framework to include editorial coverage, which often shapes public discourse and policy perspectives.

While the present study focuses on Pune city, the methodology developed here has the potential to be replicated across other urban centres. Conducting similar media prominence studies across multiple cities in Maharashtra would help build a comparative understanding of issue priorities and emerging concerns across urban Maharashtra, thereby offering valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and civic stakeholders.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- We express our gratitude to the management of Sakal, Maharashtra Times, and Loksatta for their invaluable support in facilitating access to their archives and e-paper editions, which made the data compilation for this study possible.
- Senior journalist and editor Anand Agashe reviewed the scoring framework and offered invaluable insights that helped shape the future direction of this project.

## TEAM

Harshada Abhyankar  
Neha Mahajan  
Manoj Joshi  
Dnyaneshwar Lokare  
Ajay Lad

Tanmay Kanitkar  
Mayuri Bokil  
Lucky Thakre  
Shubham Shinde  
Snehal Kinikar