

## HT Interview: “The work my father and I have done is our strongest endorsement,” says Sana Malik

Malik is contesting from a seat where her father, seasoned politician Nawab Malik, is currently the sitting MLA



Mumbai, India Nov 14, 2024: Sana Malik, a NCP (Ajit Pawar) candidate from the Anushakti Nagar Assembly constituency gives the pose during her interview with Hindustan Times. Mumbai, India, Nov 14, 2024. (Photo by Raju Shinde/HT Photo) (Hindustan Times)

Mumbai: Sana Malik, 36, an architect-turned-lawyer-turned-politician, is contesting the Anushakti Nagar assembly seat as a candidate from the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). With seven years of involvement in politics, she believes people will vote for her based on her consistent work in the community.

Malik is contesting from a seat where her father, seasoned politician Nawab Malik, is currently the sitting MLA. Despite the NCP being a part of the ruling Mahayuti alliance, none of the star campaigners of its allies, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena, have attended Sana's rallies, presumably due to Nawab's alleged links with fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim.

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While it remains to be seen if Sana can garner the support of the electorate in Anushakti Nagar, she is confident of winning. In an interview with Niraj Pandit, she discusses her work, challenges she has faced, and her vision for the constituency.

**Do you find contesting from your father's constituency challenging?**

It is not particularly challenging because I have been working in this constituency actively since 2017, when I contested the BMC election. Although I was unsuccessful, it helped me connect deeply with the people here. Since then, I have focused on Anushakti Nagar, supporting my father's campaign in the 2019 assembly election from behind the scenes. After his arrest in 2022 [in a money-laundering case], I stepped forward, leading our work with the party team.

**With the BJP opposing your father's candidacy, how has the Mahayuti supported you in this election?**

My father has always had a strong, personal connection with people from all walks of life. We are secular leaders and have always campaigned based on our work, rather than relying on special privileges. Whether people live in high-rises or slums, they know us for our consistent dedication to the constituency, and that bond remains strong.

**Why have no star campaigners from the NCP's allies visited your constituency so far?**

Some people have noted this but Ajit Pawar, our leader, visited my constituency, and I believe his support is enough. My campaign is driven by the work my father and I have done, and that stands as our strongest endorsement.

**Unemployment and drug abuse are major concerns among the youth here. How are you addressing these issues?**

Since I began working more actively in 2022, I became aware of the drug issues, especially in the Cheeta Camp area. We coordinated with senior police officials and, after my father's release [in 2023], we collaborated closely to tackle this problem. With police assistance, we apprehended eight out of nine major drug dealers, though one remains at large. To address unemployment, we regularly organise job fairs to help local youth find employment.

**Health infrastructure is another concern, with public hospitals in poor condition. What steps are you taking?**

In 2013, my father secured approval to start the Shatabdi Hospital here. We're now planning to expand it into a medical college. Soon, the work on a 500-bed hospital will be completed, significantly improving healthcare access for local residents. We also have maternity homes and health centres, especially in Cheeta Camp, and we're committed to ongoing improvements in healthcare facilities.

**What key issues will you prioritise if elected as MLA?**

We focus on three levels: education and health, social connections, and development. We're tackling issues related to project-affected people (PAP), vertical slums, and transit camps. There's a perception among some slum residents that if they're relocated, the government is solely responsible for them. We are raising awareness about shared responsibilities between the government and residents. My first proposal will address improved connectivity between Vashi Naka and the Eastern Express Highway, as the area currently lacks direct access to the highway.