



4 new slums bigger than Dharavi

Mega Shanties Move Northwards From Island City

Clara Lewis TNN

Mumbai: Dharavi, spread over 557 acres and home to nearly three lakh people, is no longer Asia's largest slum. There at least four larger contenders for the dubious distinction in Mumbai itself, some of them three times the size of Dharavi.

Strikingly, though, the island city is now largely free of slums except for a few fringe pockets.

The erstwhile smaller slums in the suburbs have metamorphosed into contiguous, large slums. The Kurla-Ghatkopar belt, the Mankhurd-Govandi belt, the Yogi and Yeoor hill slopes stretching from Bhandup to Mulund flanking the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) on the east and Dindoshi on the western flank of the National Park have all eclipsed Dharavi.

While the profile of the suburban slum settlements is still to be established, the Mankhurd-Govandi sprawl that has sprung up at the base of the Deonar dumping ground is known as a "dumping ground" for the city's poor. It has the lowest human development index in the city and is constantly in the news for malnutrition deaths. Moreover, following earlier trends, the slums have come up on hill slopes and mud flats.

The island city, meanwhile, is largely clear of slums except on the fringes, like Dharavi in the north, Antop Hill in the east, Geeta Nagar and Ambedkar Nagar in the south and Worli village in the west. Since 2005, the BMC's action against slumdweller, as part of its road widening projects, seems to have had a transformative effect. Significant initiatives were the clearing of slums along Senapati Bapat Marg from Mahim to Elphinstone Road and on P D'Mello Road from the General Post Office, Mumbai CST, to Wadala.

The exercise of mapping the slums was done by architect and civic activist P K Das, who has been involved with the rehabilitation and resettlement of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park slumdweller through the Nivara Hakk Sangharsh Samiti.

SUPER SPRAWLS Dharavi has lost its status as Asia's largest slum. It's now rivalled and dwarfed by four slum clusters in Mumbai itself

ISLAND CITY SPARED There are very few clusters left in the island city: Dharavi, Antop Hill, Geeta Nagar, Ambedkar Nagar, Worli village

NO RESERVATIONS 55% of the slums are on land reserved for housing | Contrary to popular perception, only 27% of the slum pockets have come up on open spaces or land reserved as natural reserves **POP GOES MUMBAI** In 1991, there were only 23.3 lakh (24.5%) slumdweller in the city | In 2011, an estimated 78% of the city's population lives in slums | Population density in the suburbs is highest in state: 20,925 persons per sq km

GROUND REALITY

With realty prices climbing, both the middle-class and the low-income groups began moving northwards

— **AMITA BHIDE, TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES DHARAVI DWARFED 78% Of Mumbai Lives In Slums, Including Four Newer Settlements Three Times Asia's Erstwhile Largest Slum** Dharavi, the famed slum settlement of Mumbai, has serious competition from at least four contenders in terms of size.

Provisional data from the 2011 census shows there are 3.1 crore people in the island city and 9.3 crore in the suburbs, while nearly 78% of the city's population lives in slums. Population density in the suburbs is the highest in the state, at 20,925 persons per sq km, whereas it is 20,038 person per sq km in the island city

"This exercise has been done because the current trend of slum redevelopment is leading to anarchic development in the city. What is required is comprehensive planning and a master plan for the entire city so that slum redevelopment leads to an improvement in the quality of life," architect P K Das, who did the city's slum-mapping, said.

According to the 2001 census, Mumbai had a total population of 11.9 million, of which 64.5 lakh or 54.5% lived in slums. There were only 23.3 lakh slumdweller in 1991, which was 24.5% of Mumbai's total population of 99.6 lakh, whereas in 1981 the 22.8 lakh slumdweller comprised 27.7% of the total 82.5 lakh population.

Das, who super-imposed Google maps on the 1991 development plan of Mumbai prepared by the BMC, said it was a misconception that all the slums were on land reserved for open spaces. "Nearly 55% of the slums are on land reserved for housing. Only 17% are on land reserved for open spaces and 10% on land designated as natural reserves," he said.

A few weeks ago, Das had made a presentation of the slum mapping to chief minister Prithviraj Chavan. A senior bureaucrat from the housing department said the government was keen to prepare a master plan for the city's slums but is undecided on who should do the mapping and prepare the plan. "Under the Constitution, the right vests with the local selfgovernment body, that is the BMC. But we also have a Slum Rehabilitation Authority. The government is still deciding who should do it," said the official. "That 78% of the city should reside in slums clearly indicates that there is something wrong. How can such a vast majority be illegal residents of a city?" added the official.

Amita Bhide, chairperson, Centre of Urban Planning, Policy and Governance in the School of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social

Sciences, said the trend of slums moving northwards was visible since the 1981 census. "With realty prices climbing, both the middleclass and the low income groups began moving northwards," she said.

Das said the government must reserve all slum land for affordable housing. "Instead of allowing a part of the land to be commercially exploited in exchange for free housing, the government must construct affordable houses ranging from 300 square feet to 600 sq ft, following town planning norms that are now completely absent in all slum rehabilitation projects," said Das.

Officials said while the government wants to ensure housing for the urban poor, there are legal issues as the Slum Redevelopment Act mandates free housing for all structures protected up to 1995. "This is one of the reasons why it has been difficult for us to even take up a pilot project under the Rajiv Gandhi Awaas Yojana in the city that requires slum dwellers to pay part of the cost of construction," said an official. However, urban development officials attributed the lack of progress to the strong builders' lobby that opposed the scheme as the present SRA scheme ensured a profit of nearly 40%.

Bhide said Mumbai's slums were unique as there were not just issues of poverty but of land and businesses that are run from these settlements.



