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# Drive to clear pipelines of huts hits a wall

## 'Vehicles Can't Reach Sites'

Sukhada Tatke | TNN

### Times View

Mumbai: The BMC's ambitious project of removing encroachments along water pipelines has met with another stumbling block in the first phase itself. The civic body admits that it has to push the deadline ahead every month because of a tricky problem: vehicles have been unable to reach the encroachment sites.

According to the project, first phase of the work will be in the S and G north wards, the second in the N, T and M west wards, the third in the K east and F north wards, and the fourth in the H east and L wards. Additional municipal commissioner Rajeev Jalota said the work in S ward has slowed down as it has to be carried out manually

Trying to remove encroachments after allowing them to come up is like bolting the stable door after the horses have fled. It's no secret that encroachment—close to or far from Mumbai's water-supplying pipelines—thrives under the direct patronage of the politician-bureaucrat nexus; it follows that the removal of encroachments will be a difficult job as it rests on the very people who have actively encouraged these unauthorized colonies. The only solution to the problem would be not allowing encroachments to spring up in the first place by making affordable, government housing a reality.



Demolition being carried out on Tansa main in Bhandup in August

"The lanes are narrow and it is not possible to manoeuvre our JCBs or any other vehicles. Due to this, we are forced to demolish the structure manually. There are at least 900 structures in the belt that need to be demolished in this manner," he said.

Assistant municipal commissioner (S ward) Ramakant Biradar said a major portion in the belt between Tendipada (Bhandup) to Milind Nagar (Powai) is in a hilly region. "On a given day, there are at least 35 labourers working. A group of five works on one structure, which takes a day to demolish. Mostly, they are all pucca structures, some even two-storeyed, which makes our work more difficult," he said. "We have to keep asking the court to extend our deadline.

ed. There are at least 1,500 homes that need to be demolished. Of these, we have managed to clear 90. It will take us another four to five months for the rest," he added. Meanwhile, 238 shanties have been demolished in G/North ward, and 95 households rehabilitated.

The matter of encroachments along the pipelines was brought to the fore in 2006, when the NGO Janhit Manch filed a PIL in the high court, claiming that 20% of the city's water supply, or about 600 million litres, was lost due to wastage, theft and leaks because of squatters. The court on July 29, 2009, passed an order to constitute a committee comprising the chief secretary, the director-general of police, the municipal commissioner and the principal secretary to look into the problem.

The civic body carried out a survey of huts located within 10 m on either side of the pipelines. The survey showed 15,789 huts, of which 6,687 came up before 1996, 2,103 between 1996 and 2000, and 6,193 after 2000. The status of 806 could not be verified. Residents who have been living in

Our last deadline was August- the huts before 2000 are eligible  
end, but we had to get it extend- for rehabilitation.