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Kurla-Ghatkopar belt is king of Slumbai

Clara Lewis | TNN

Mumbai: It is difficult to imagine that the Kurla-Ghatkopar belt on the eastern side is a range of hillocks. But every monsoon, one is reminded of this reality when people die in landslides in a slum that has overshadowed Dharavi.

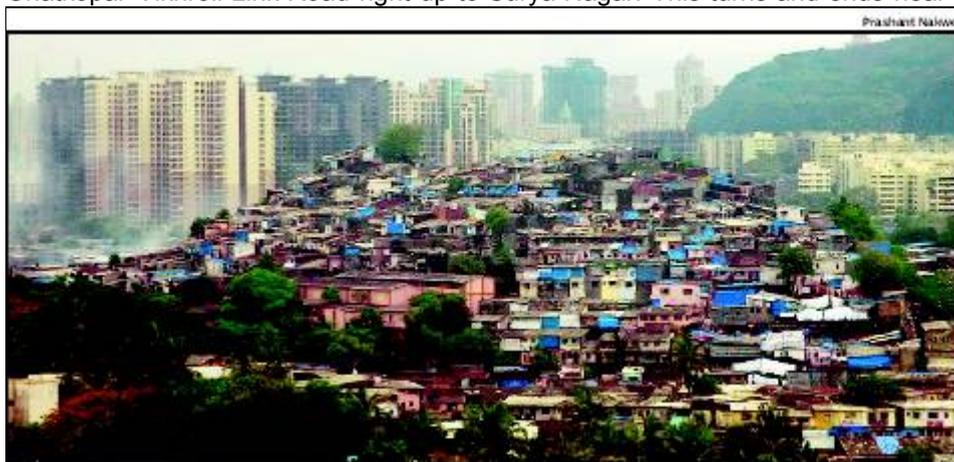
The Kurla West-Ghatkopar West belt, part of the L and N civic wards, comprises at least 75 large slum settlements, said Anil Galgali, a social activist and local resident. The BMC said the L-ward population is approximately 7.78 lakh, with nearly 80% in slums. In N-ward (Ghatkopar), 70% of the seven lakh population lives in slums. In Ghatkopar West, nearly four lakh people reside in slums.

P K Das, architect and civic activist, who did a slum mapping of the city, said understanding the size and variation in the densities of slum pockets is crucial for planning. "There is a housing crisis in the city and there is no additional land available for housing the urban poor. Slum land must therefore be reserved for affordable housing," he said.

To understand the spread of slums in the area, one can start walking from the Kurla side of the airport. It is a continuous stretch of settlements starting from Kajupada right up to Surya Nagar on Ghatkopar-Vikhroli Link Road. The slum curves towards Powai, ending at the IIT-B, Powai market area. "It is an uneven circle. What made the hillocks an ideal settlement for slums? Galgali points out to the quarrying of the hills and their abandonment resulting in flat land ideal for houses. "The entire stretch from Sakinaka to the LBS Marg from Kurla to Mulund is an industrial belt. Along with industries came labour. With the exception of Godrej and Tatas (Swadeshi Mills) none of the others thought of creating quarters for their employees," said Galgali. Slums, he said, were a natural fallout of the government's failure to facilitate construction of rental housing in the area.

There are approximately 75 large slum settlements from Kurla to Ghatkopar, like Khadi No 3, followed by Milind Nagar behind the hillock and Mohili village, which ends near Sangharsh Nagar. If one moves towards Mulund from Kajupada, first comes the Sunderbaug slum, then Gaiban Shah dargah slum. Between the slums, is coming one of Mumbai's biggest malls. After the mall is Narayan Nagar and Azad Nagar in Ghatkopar West, which is infamous for landslides. Less than 1 km from the mall is the Premier Automobile site where the airport slums are to be rehabilitated. Then comes the Bhim Nagar slum.

This is followed by the Vikhroli Parksite slum, which starts from Amrut Nagar in Ghatkopar West along Ghatkopar-Vikhroli Link Road right up to Surya Nagar. This turns and ends near IIT Powai market.



SPOT THE HILLS: The slums along Kurla-Ghatkopar have grown into one contiguous belt