



Conservancy workers to get apartment-style flats

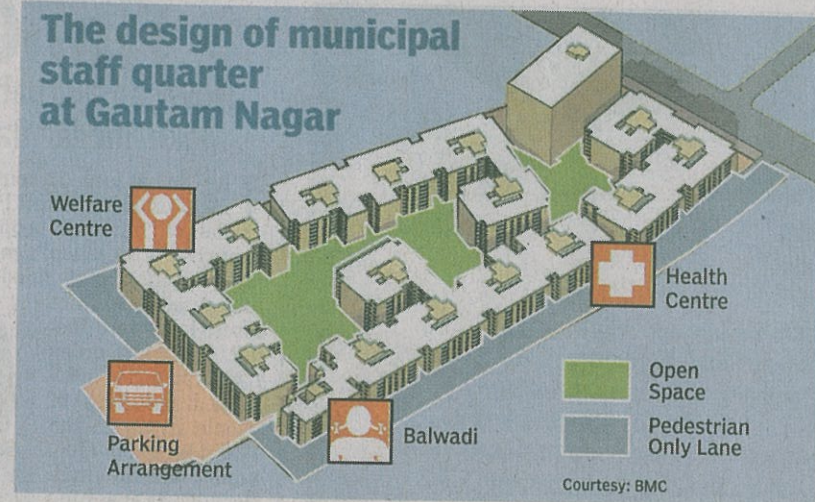
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Sandeep Ashar

Hope for quality housing has arrived at last, for families of conservancy workers, who have been sweeping streets and lanes in the city for the last century and a half.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), which employs as many as 27,616 conservancy workers, has finally prepared a master plan for project 'Ashray (Shelter)', to create housing for conservancy workers.

Though conservancy workers are crucial to the city's health and cleanliness, their family dignity and welfare has always been ignored. In fact, as things exist today, the civic body has made housing arrangements for only



4,554 of these families.

The remaining 23,062 continue to stay in rented settlements in poor conditions; some are even put up in slums. Manoj Solanki, president of the Safai Karma-

chari Vikas Sangh, said that while conservancy workers earn Rs6,000 salary, many have to pay Rs2,000 as rent for their accommodation.

This may all soon change for the bet-

ter. In fact, graduating from the chawl-type 1-room kitchens, the families will now be accommodated in a 300 sq ft apartment, comprising a multi-purpose room, hall and a kitchen. "Many families have now expanded, and want additional space," said V Radha, joint municipal commissioner.

The BMC has already identified 38 plots, 19 on the island city, 10 in the western suburbs, and nine in the eastern suburbs, and it plans to set up seven-storey colonies, using a Floor Space Index of four, to accommodate 20,743 conservancy families. Radha added that the BMC was keen to give these families recognition and dignity, and so it has roped in renowned architect PK Das to aid in the holistic development of these plots, and deliver high quality infrastructure. Das and his team have already surveyed the plots and prepared the designs.

"The plan is to provide them with integrated and comprehensive housing facilities. The buildings will be well lit and have quality infrastructure, including

elevators. Social amenities like balwadis, health centres and open spaces, which are non-existent today, will be provided on 15 per cent of the plot."

Radha said that the redevelopment would also enable staff to be housed in their respective wards, which is crucial for their effective functioning. With the cost of the construction estimated at Rs1,300 per sq ft, the project will cost the BMC Rs2,870 crore.

Civic officials said that the market value of all these plots, collectively measuring 1.88 lakh sq m, was Rs7,652 crore. Radha said that the project would be completed in phases, and require environmental clearance. Also, the plan for the suburbs would have to be cleared by the state. Bids will be invited from developers to build these plots using BMC designs.

The news should relieve conservancy workers, around 300 of whom, protested at Azad Maidan on Thursday, demanding self-owned, better housing.

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—V Radha,
joint municipal commissioner

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