

Jockin on NDTV 24/7 on 03-01-2005

Mumbai Live

Anchor: Mumbai city is on a demolition drive, flattening all shanties built after 1995. In this election, politicians had promised legal status to slum dwellers to garner votes. Now, nearly 40,000 people are homeless and the big question is where will they go?

Reporter: Shehnaz Bano has just returned from burying her daughter who returned after burying her daughter who died of pneumonia in the early hours of the morning. Shehnaz blames her daughter's death not on her illness but on the city's politicians who led her to it. She lives in a suburban Mumbai slum which was demolished a few days ago by the BMC in its ongoing drive against illegal slums built after 1995. Slums that the city's politicians had promised to protect. Shehnaz and her family now live under the open sky.

Shennaz (trans. from Hindi): The wind caught my daughter. The four walls of our house were demolished- that's why she caught a chill.

Reporter Supriya Menon/Dipti: Civic authorities have destroyed nearly 40,000 slum hutments in an effort to ensure that the land stays clear. But they have not planned for the families who have been rendered homeless. And the residents say that the politicians who have encouraged them to live here have done the disappearing act.

Woman Slum Dweller (name not mentioned on NDTV! ☹): When they want votes they come calling us their sisters. When they win, they have turned a complete blind eye to our condition.

Man slum dweller (name not mentioned on NDTV! ☹) When we don't vote then we are illegal but even after voting they tell us we are here illegally. So if our votes are illegal then the ministers who won because of them are also illegal. They should also be removed!

Reporter Supriya Menon/Dipti: The people whose hutments have been demolished here have now moved to the other side. The problem of encroachment in the city seems to be exactly where it began. It is only that the condition of the people living in these huts that has worsened.

Anchor: And to discuss this with us today we have Jockin, the president of the National Slum Dwellers Federation. Sir, Dipti (reporter) was just telling us that the problems of the slum dwellers have not really gone away. First they had a roof over their heads, now the problem is even more- they don't have houses. Do you support the demolition drive of the BMC? Do you think they will be effective?

A. Jockin: I am very certain; I am not supporting the demolition. This is not the way of doing anything. They are only removing the shelter. They are not preventing, they are not doing anything good to the city. They are not trying to solve the problem. They are only creating more problems.

Anchor: What is the “more” problem?

A.Jockin: The more problem is that there are two hundred thousand people on the roads today. There is not shelter. All human rights issues have gone up. What happened to the children? The kids?

Anchor: They are saying these people do not have a right to be here. They have come from other states and built shanties illegally. They must go.

A. Jockin: Nobody has the statistic. Today majority of the people whose hutments are being demolished are from Maharashtra- from Raigarh, from Ratnagiri. You have not even checked. You just want to create a chaos. You are not solving the problem. You are not addressing the problem. You are the one who continuously promise the people -these are political gimmicks. This is another political drama. You are only demolishing the people –moving from one road to another road. How many people have gone out of Mumbai? If they have really gone out, then they would have not even come to the city. They are the people in the villages that have no land – in the city also they have no land- they are squatting here and there. You promise 2000, somebody promises 2004 – last week, I remember when I was with Barkha Dutt, they were talking about 2004. Somebody is talking about 2000. Who are feeding these people? You are welcoming the people, you allow them to stay on the land for five years, six years, ten years. Then you go on a drive, bull-doing, creating more jobs, more economy, more finances for yourself! You are not solving the problem, you are not really addressing the problem.

Anchor: What needs to be done?

A.Jockin: An alternative needs to be found. First, you have to see what is the total number that is required to be in Mumbai? Do you have an idea? No! Every election year you are trying to do some drama. You should finally seal your city. These many people, more than enough. All these people that are there- do something.

Anchor: Do what?

A.Jockin: All these people, those who are here, they come to survive. Can't you give them a place? An open place? An ask them to pay for it.

Anchor: Can they afford to pay for it?

A.Jockin: Certainly. If you want to live in Bombay, you can afford to pay Rs. 5/- a day. The government should work out an alternative. They are not asking big land- they are asking 20 hectares, 10 hectares.

Anchor: And the city can afford to give this land?

A.Jockin: Yes, the city can afford to give 200 hectares of land.

Anchor: Thank you sir, thank you.