

Kathputli Colony hits development road

Residents Told To Vacate; They Will Be Rehabilitated Once DDA Builds New Flats There

Sayantana Ghosh | THN

New Delhi: The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) started a drive on Monday to shift residents of Kathputli Colony, a 40-year old slum inhabited by street artists near Shadipur Depot, to a transit camp and demolish the houses to make way for a redevelopment project on the same site.

DDA, which owns the land, started issuing demolition slips to the residents of the colony, on Monday, under the cover of nearly 500 police and paramilitary personnel.

Dilip Bhat, one of the leaders of the community, claimed that they were not informed about DDA's demolition earlier. "Police started coming into the colony on Sunday night and said we have to vacate our houses today. They have been camping here since then," said Prakash, a juggler. "I am worried that they may force us to vacate," he said.

Many of the artists said they do not want to leave the colony. "I have spent 20 years here. They are allotting one



Arindya Chattopadhyay

Nearly 500 police and paramilitary personnel were roped in for the drive

flat per family; the new flat will just not be able to accommodate my family of 13, along with my instruments of magic," Krishna Bhat, a street magician, said. Also, residents said many of the slum rehabilitation schemes in the city had fallen by the wayside with residents left in the

lurch.

Sanjana, a 15-year-old student, and her 6-year-old sister, Muskan, were allegedly awoken on Monday morning and taken to the DDA camp in the colony, set up for the purpose of the registration of the residents.

"They told me that we have

70-year-old puppeteer scared, says demolition will kill old ties

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New Delhi: Jagadish Bhat, a 70-year-old puppet artist, is one of the oldest resident of Kathputli colony. He has spent 50 years in those streets. This award winning artist now spends his time teaching children the art of puppetry.

Bhat is one of among those who are scared of DDA's demolition drive that started on Monday.

"If I don't get other accommodation, my puppets along with other instruments will get damaged. If something happens to them, I will die,"

he said.

Bhat, who is born and brought up in Lucknow, learnt the art from his father. "I shifted to Delhi in 1964. My first show was on China war," he said.

Sitting with "Madhuri Dixit", one of his puppet, Bhatt waits for justice. "Hum kokyunhatanechatehho (Why do you want us to go?)," he asked the DDA officials.

The flats will destroy the love between the people and they will lose their identity. "I don't want a big house. I am happy with my poverty," he said.

ve to register this house like everybody else," Sanjana said, adding that their mother is retarded and does not understand these matters. "They have signed in some other name, but the registration is in our name," Sanjana alleged.

Satyendar Jain, the Delhi

government's urban development minister, who visited the colony a little after noon time, spoke to the Delhi Development Authority officials and later reassured the residents that they need not vacate their houses if they did not approve of the rehabilitation project. Jain also met the two

girls who alleged that DDA officials had forced them to register, and got the document cancelled. "Delhi Development Authority can't force people to leave. We will not let this happen," Jain said, addressing the residents.

DDA officials, however, denied the allegation. "We are not forcing people to vacate their houses; we are only trying to convince them about the scheme," said JP Agarwal, principal commissioner (land disposal and housing) of DDA.

This colony was selected for in situ redevelopment by DDA, on a Public-Private Partnership model with Raheja Developers, in 2009. After seven years, Delhi Development Authority has finally embarked upon a demolition drive, even though half of the residents, many of whom refuse to move to the transit camps, are still living here.

Police and paramilitary forces were deployed at every corner of the colony, armed with guns, sticks, tear gas, while at least three mobile water cannon units were also seen at the place.