

Maha has highest slum population, reveals survey

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Mumbai: A survey, conducted by a high-level committee set up by the ministry of housing and urban poverty alleviation for a new slum census, has revealed that Maharashtra has the dubious distinction of having the maximum number of people living in slums.

According to the 2001 census, the state had 19.03% of the total slum population in the country. It was followed by Uttar Pradesh (11.75%), Andhra Pradesh (9.77%), Tamil Nadu (8.73%) and Madhya Pradesh (7.06%). As per the survey, the slum

it was found that in the absence of a uniform definition of what constitutes a slum, the Centre was unable to obtain specific information. "It was observed that each state had a different definition. Now for the fresh census, the Centre in consultation with state governments, has drafted a common definition of a slum," he said.

The 2001 slum census report covered 1,743 cities/towns in the country with an overall population of more than 20,000, of a total of 5,161 cities/towns. However, now according to the revised guidelines, it has been decided to account for the slum population even in cities with a population of less than 20,000.

According to the official, the spurt will have an adverse impact on the Centre's dream of a 'slum-free India'. "The Centre had drafted a comprehensive action plan for a slum-free India by the following decade but the rate at which slums are increasing, it appears that we will miss the target," he said.

Nearer home, in Mumbai, there were a total of 15 lakh slums. In the rest of the state, the number touched 13 lakh. "We will have to provide free houses to a population of nearly 1.4 crore and will require an amount of well over Rs 27,000 crore," he said.

During all deliberations with central agencies, the proposals for slum-free India were discussed at length but so far no project has taken off, owing to paucity of funds. "We made it clear that no plan can be undertaken with mere budgetary support. The project will have to be designed on a public-private partnership basis. We are working to implement the project in a time-bound period," he said.

When the saffron combine took over the reins in 1995, it had promised free houses to a population of 40 million. "It was an ambitious project but owing to lack of political will, it failed to take off," he said.

Sorry State

State	Slum population
Maharashtra	19.03%
Uttar Pradesh	11.75%
Andhra Pradesh	9.77%
Tamil Nadu	8.73%
Madhya Pradesh	7.06%

(According to the 2001 census)

Future of Maharashtra?

Year	Slum population
2011	1.81 cr
2012	1.85 cr
2017	Over 2.05 cr

population in Maharashtra will be 1.81 crore in 2011, 1.85 crore in 2012 and will cross the 2.05-crore mark in the year 2017.

"The growth in the slum population is alarming but not surprising. With increasing urbanisation, the state was bound to witness such a situation. In the last two decades, there has been large-scale development here. As a result, there was large-scale migration from neighbouring states," a senior official told TOI.

About the terms of reference of the committee, the official said in the 2001 census too, the slum population was taken into account. However, then