

Slum-free India? No chance

Shanty Dwellers To Swell To 10.4Cr By 2017, State To Have Highest Number

Dipak Kumar Dash | TNN

New Delhi: India's slum population will surge to 10.4 crore by 2017 — or around 9% of the total projected national population of 128 crore for that year. This means urban planners will face escalating challenges as these slums will mostly proliferate in sleepy towns and in semi-rural areas, a consequence of an accelerating rural to urban shift across the nation.

According to data presented before Parliament, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh will host the largest chunks of India's slum population (see box).

In a reply to a starred question by Nashik MP Sameer Bhujbal last week in Parliament, the government offered a projection of the slum population on the basis of the Pranab Sen Committee report submitted in 2010. The committee's previous projection of slum population in 2011 was 9.3

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crore, or 7% of a total population of 121 crore.

However, the census of 2011 recorded 1.3 crore urban slum households. So, if a household is estimated at five members, the urban slum population would be around 6.5 crore. This 6.5 crore figure is considerably lower than the Sen Committee's projection of 9.3 crore slum dwellers in 2011 (based on the 2001 census).

The 2011 census shows the problem is growing as it indicates the percentage of people living in slums in smaller cities with a popula-

Slum population figures

State	2011	2017 (projected)
Maharashtra	1.81	2.05
UP	1.1	1.2
Andhra Pradesh	0.81	0.86
MP	0.64	0.71
Gujarat	0.46	0.52
Delhi	0.31	0.37

All figures in crores
Source: Parliament question

tion of less than a million is rising. While 62% people in these cities are slum dwellers, it is 38% in all million-plus cities, including mega metros such as Delhi and Mumbai.

In absolute numbers, while million-plus cities have 52 lakh slum households, the count is 85 lakh in the sub-million cities. "We are creating a bigger problem by failing to manage both bigger and smaller cities. Places like Khurja and Bulandshahr close to Delhi have become slums due to faulty planning and poor

programme implementation. We can't allow unchecked and unplanned urban growth. Governments must understand this and take steps keeping their political reasons aside," said H R Suri, former head, Institute of Town Planners India.

Census data also shows how a large section of the urban population lives in slums in the four metropolitan cities — as high as 41.3% in Greater Mumbai, 29.6% in Kolkata, 28% in Chennai and about 15% in Delhi.

The socio-economic implications of a large slum population — which includes the cost of civic services, housing and health-care, and increased crime and social tensions — saw the UPA government frame the Rajiv Awas Yojna as a policy response. The scheme is intended to provide affordable housing to the poor and make urban areas slum free but so far these efforts have registered little progress in focus cities, including Delhi.