

A still of Bhandi Bazaar

# Need for renewal

A crumbling Bhandi Bazaar requires urgent, planned redevelopment

**Abbas Master**

It has been a long wait for the monsoon this year. Now that the rains have arrived bringing relief to a parched city, let us not forget that for thousands, this is a potentially fatal period. Living in crumbling buildings that need redevelopment, there are Mumbaikars who court death every day. The downpour makes this danger even more real.

Just days ago, two pavement dwellers were crushed to death after a portion of their building at Sewri fell on them. Five people were injured in a collapse at Colaba. These are not mere statistics, but stories of real people with meagre resources who cannot manage house-repairs or better homes.

Despite this looming threat, most residents are fearful of vacating their homes. This worry, however, is endangering not just their lives but the lives of several others in the vicinity (even of those who may be walking down the street when disaster strikes).

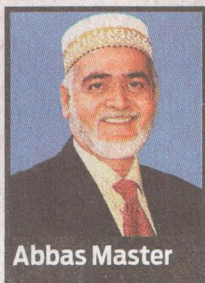
Bhandi Bazaar is a classic example of how redevelopment projects continue to face challenges as residents refuse to accept change. In 2011, over 50 families were relocated from Galabhai Chawl—the first building in the area to be declared hazardous—to a transit home in Mazgaon. Since then, the condition of that building has deteriorated alarm-

ingly. Last week, a part of the structure collapsed, but even that was not reason enough for a particular family to move out of the dilapidated building into the safe haven of a transit home. It is only a matter of time before the entire building falls apart, endangering lives of shopkeepers, patrons and pedestrians in the vicinity.

Every year during this period, the authorities have to pool in all their resources to ensure that loss of life can be avoided. However, if residents step forward and cooperate in the relocation, these resources can be used more constructively rather than for damage control.

This year alone, the BMC has declared 400 buildings, which are more than 30 years old, as vulnerable to collapse. In May, the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) declared that eight buildings may face the threat of collapse. MHADA decided to demolish three and repair the rest. This number will continue to rise.

Persuading residents to move out is never easy. But letting people live with the risk of impending death is unacceptable. Redevelopment and relocation are not just about creating better infrastructure; there are emotions of residents involved. This is where the state government can step in with clear policies that reassure residents and pave the way for quick redevelopment.



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