

ASIA PACIFIC NEWS

Redevelopment of Mumbai's Bhendi Bazaar hits minor snag

By Murtuza Merchant | Posted: 31 December 2012 2206 hrs

MUMBAI, India: Bhendi Bazaar, one of the most congested areas in Mumbai, is undergoing massive redevelopment.

The entire bill will be paid for by Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust, a cash-rich, non-profit organisation that views the project as an extension of its charitable work for the community.

The intention is to uplift lower- and middle-income families in the area, but the plan has run into opposition from the very people who will benefit from it.



An ambitious project to redevelop Bhendi Bazaar in South Mumbai has come to a sudden halt, only three months after work began.

The plan was to transform the congested area into a modern residential-commercial neighbourhood, covering almost 40,000 square metres.

It is a US\$29 billion project that promises more trees, congestion-free roads, and the city's longest shopping corridor.

It would also mean demolishing 250 buildings, and affecting the lives of some 25,000 people.

Both shopkeepers and residents had given their consent to the project, which was initiated three years ago.

However, now the shopkeepers are unhappy that residents will be getting extra floor space for their demolished apartments.

Shopkeepers have also complained that the compensation is not enough to sustain their livelihood.

Authorities said the shopkeepers are given more than the current market value of their shops.

Abbas Master, CEO of the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust, said: "There was a consensus and everybody signed...as to what the rent at that time should be. And when we arrived at that rent, we had done a market survey also, and the market survey was significantly lower than what we were offering at that time.

"Currently, we have enhanced it, knowing that this was established a couple of years back. We have taken care of inflation and escalation."

But not all shopkeepers are unhappy with the compensation amount of US\$3 per square foot from the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust.

Mustafa Arsiwala, a shopkeeper, said: "We are getting US\$3 per square foot. The rent that has been given to us is enough for us to sustain our livelihood."

The work stoppage is seen as a minor glitch, and the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust remains confident that the redevelopment project will be completed within its stipulated time frame of five years.

The authorities have said that this project is for uplifting the lower middle class families, and that a handful of shopkeepers arm twisting the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust will not deter them from going ahead with further demolitions and rehabilitations.

- CNA/ms

Reference: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/southasia/view/1245340/1/.html>