Drive to clear pipelines of huts hits a wall

‘Vehicles Can’t Reach Sites’

Sukhada Tatke | TNN

Mumbai: The BMC’s ambitious project of removing encroachments along water pipelines has met with another stumbling block in the first phase itself. The civic body admits that it has to push the deadline ahead every month because of a tricky problem: vehicles have been unable to reach the encroachment sites.

According to the project, first phase of the work will begin from the Sandal and G North wards, the second in the N, T and M west wards, the third in Thane, E and F north wards, and the fourth in the H east and L wards. Additional municipal commissioner Rajeev Jabardast said the work in wards has slowed down as it has to be carried out manually.

There are at least 1,500 homes that need to be demolished. Of these, we have managed to clear 90. It will take us another four to five months for the rest,” he added. Meanwhile, 220 slum-dwellers have been demolished in G/ North ward, and 36 households rehabilitated.

The matter of encroachments along the pipelines was brought to the fore in 2006, when the NGO Jharkhanda filed a PIL in the high court, claiming that 20% of the city’s water supply, at about 600 million litres, was lost due to wastage, theft and leaks because of squatters. The court, on July 29, 2006, passed an order to constitute a committee comprising the chief secretary, the director-general of police, the municipal commissioner and the principal secretaries to look into the problem.

The civic body carried out a survey of 143 huts located within 100 metres either side of the pipeline. The survey showed 15,589 huts, of which 6,687 came up before 1996, 2,103 between 1996 and 2000, and 6,169 after 2000. The status of 806 could not be verified. Residents who have been living in
Our last deadline was August-end, but we had to get it extended. The huts before 2000 are eligible for rehabilitation.