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Slum dwellers to get homes within Chennai

Locality near Seven Wells identified for building tenements

In a major policy shift that could help safeguard the livelihood of the slum dwellers to some extent, the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) has decided to construct tenements in Moolakothalam near Seven Wells.

The Board has also identified around 40 localities in and around the city for resettlement and relocation of slum dwellers and homeless families.

Unlike the previous resettlement colonies, which were over 50 km away from the city centre, some of the new localities could be much closer and within one hour of travel time.

The move comes in the aftermath of the government's decision to stop building tenements en masse in the outskirts of the city so as to avoid ghettoisation.

All these tenements will be constructed as part of Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP) as part of the Housing for All (Urban) Scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

Under this scheme, financial assistance will be provided for houses for economically weaker sections that are being built in partnerships by States /UTs/cities. “We have received approval for three locations so far from the Centre. Construction work will soon begin. While we have identified several other areas, they are under the jurisdiction of various departments with whom talks are underway,” said a senior official from TNSCB. Apart from Moolakothalam, slum dwellers are expected to be relocated to Manali New Town and Thailavaram in Maraimalai Nagar.

Enumeration process

In the phase one of the project, the Board will construct 648 tenements on 11.5 acres in Moolakothalam. In the next phase, 400 tenements are expected to be built. “The enumeration for the tenements is currently in process. Families in and around the area will soon be provided houses,” the official said.

Around 1.48 lakh families across the city have been identified and enumerated under AHP. The Board had received approval to build over 5,000 multi-storeyed tenements.

The Board's decision to refrain from en masse construction of tenements in the outskirts may help ensure mixed development of relocated and host communities.

However, those who have already been relocated to tenements further away claim their lives have been adversely affected after the move.

"If you look at these building walls, it seems like they might come crumbling down any time," said Vasanthi, fitting her hand in a large hole in the entrance wall at her house in Gudapakkam.

"My husband is unemployed. There is nothing for us or our children here. The State has successfully isolated us," Ms. Vasanthi said.