

# National Alliance of People's Movements

E-mail: [napmmumbai@gmail.com](mailto:napmmumbai@gmail.com)

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## Update: Mumbai

- Slum dwellers deposit Rs 2000 with Chief Minister demanding lease of land as against builders paying 40 paise/acre, challenging unjustifiable low lease rent for builders.
- Thousands assemble at Azad Maidain and resolve to fight back any attempt of the government to demolish slums afresh.
- Delegation meets Minister for State, Urban Development, Maharashtra and challenge the decision of repealing ULCRA.





Today more than 3000 people representing various slum communities assembled at Azad Maidain to express their protest against the recent declaration of starting slum demolitions afresh, by both, the C.M as well as the Municipal Corporation. The demolitions are to carried out as the residents, post year 2000 are to be considered as 'encroachers' and thus 'illegal'. They also challenged the repeal of Urban land Ceiling (Regulation) Act since this would lead to sanctioning of an illegal occupation of 30,000 acres of land by the offenders of the Act. The people demanding an equitable Housing Policy from the Committee formed for evolving the same, as per the orders of Hon'ble High Court, Mumbai..





The Committee therefore was to formulate a policy that would ensure housing to all irrespective of any cut off date. The struggling people's representatives including Santosh Thorat, Nasrin Bano and others with Mohan Chavan, Simpreet Singh, Shailesh Gandhi and Medha Patkar met Sh. Rajesh Tope, Minister for State, Urban Development &



questioned the fact that no report had come out of the Committee and the process appears to have been shelved. Also present during the meeting were Sh Ramanand Tiwar, Principal Secretary, Dept of Urban Development, Sh Benjamin, Sh Chandrashekar, Sh Kshatriya and others.

The delegation expressed a serious concern about the new draft of the Housing Policy and insisted on a good meeting with all officials, Mr Tope and C.M himself. The said meeting they are promised will be held on Kan 8, 2008.

They questioned the unjustifiable cheap lease rent recovered from the lessors, across the city. The latest being the expose of land deal at the rate of 40 paise per acre. It may be noted that after the demolition of 75,000 houses in 2004-2005 the struggle by the affected slum dwellers led to the intervention in to the policy making through mass action as well as legal action by National Alliance of People's Movements and various community level slum resident associations. Adv Mihir Desai pleaded for the case in which the Chief Justice of High Court Mumbai issued orders directing the State Government to form a Policy making committee involving senior level officials and representatives of people's movements. The Chief Justice bench had clearly declared that any sort of cut-off date was illegal and violation of the Constitution.



In presence of Mrinal Gore, veteran socialist leader and petitioner in the case on Urban Land Ceiling Act thousands of people condemned the repeal of ULCRA and demanded its strict compliance. Minister during discussion, with bureaucrats admitted that repeal will lead to 250 acres of land coming into the hands of the government while as yet there is no guarantee of thousands of acres of land being available for housing the poor and middle class people, a major claim justifying the repeal.

The delegation and the public meeting at Azad Maidan openly declared opposition to any eviction without formulation of an equitable policy and seeking consent of people. The people protested against discrimination between the rich and the poor obvious from the fact that other than the very needy, rich who also come to Mumbai after 2000 or even 2005 are not evicted and are granted a status of a legitimate resident. Are the poor who use minimum of Mumbai's resources and services more a burden than the rich who depend upon their toil, they asked. The movement has decided to oppose demolitions on ground and also raise a legal question related to violation of Maharashtra Slum Act 1976 since no demolition scheme is formulated before evictions.



The encroachments upon the right to life and livelihood against the constitution and UN covenants is also highlighted in justification of the people's struggle and against the decision to demolish thousands of houses who are not even surveyed to decide the year of their origin or family's migration.

A major expose of a scam made by the people today was of the government leasing out land to certain people at the rate of negligible 40 paise per acre for 80 years lease leading to development of the luxurious apartments and amenities as at Hiranandani Gardens.

The people of Mandala took the initiative under the guidance of NAPM and Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan to offer to pay 100 times the lease rent approved for the big builders, i.e 40 rs per acre. A D.D of Rs. 2000/- for 50 acres land at Mandala, Mankhurd on 80 years lease where they assured the Minister that the houses would be built by themselves.

After some hesitation, The Minister, Mr Tope accepted the DD drawn in the name of Chief Minister, along with a memorandum. The demands of these agitators also included priority to the poor, in housing, land allotment, water supply and other amenities.





**Mohan Chavan, Maju Verghese, Hyder Imam, Simpreet Singh, Mukta Srivastava Medha Patkar**