

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS
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Press Release

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- Extending cut-off date for slum rehab., too little, too late.
- Slum dwellers, not to be lured, to continue with their struggle for realization of their constitutional rights.

The decision of the Maharashtra state government to extend the cut-off date for slum rehabilitation from 1995 to 2000 comes of as too little, too-late. The timings of the decision and also when the promise for the same was made, makes it clear that, rather than being a rights recognizing exercise, the decision is another in the vote bank politics game engaged in by all the political parties. Earlier during the year 2004, the Congress-I, had in its electoral manifesto, promised to the slum dwellers, about the same but after coming to the power it went for massive demolition drives and flip-flops like terming the episode as a 'printing mistake'.

The decision also is contradictory to the order of the High Court bench of Chief Justice, who, hearing a case of the slum-dwellers on 25th August 2005 had observed, "this (the extension of cut-offs) is a political gimmick. The approach cannot be ad-hoc. The state has to have a consistent policy and look at rehabilitation realistically. It is a basic human right".

Followingly, a High Powered Committee was formed under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, to formulate a Housing Policy for the slum dwellers, which would provide affordable housing to the poor, sans any cut off date, clearly spelled out in its terms of reference. Now this decision, which comes after more than 20 months of its promise, subverts the working of the Committee and smokes of ulterior motives.

One major reason, which keeps lakhs of people confined to such in-habitable conditions in Mumbai is their non recognition of being citizens, but only as vote banks,. Un till their rights are recognized and the nexus of the builder-politicians-bureaucrats-police broken, any solution to this will be half heartily and in practical. The recent expose of the nexus by the Anti Corruption Bureau, in the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme, is testimony to this.

Understanding the politics of the cut-off dates, which are ill legal and un-constitutional, slum dwellers have decided to continue with their struggle for their rights including right to housing, which once again will be exerted by them on October 3rd, World Habitat Day, when thousands will be coming together in Mumbai.

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