

An Underground Rail Corridor And Multi-Storey Towers Are Changing The Character Of City's Oldest Neighbourhoods

30 bldgs make way for 2 Metro stns & 3 highrises

Ready by 2020-21

Manthan K Mehta & Bhavika Jain | TNN

Girgaum's two-storey Kranti Nagar chawls, once home to 108 families, stand vacant, waiting to be bulldozed for the underground Colaba-Seepz Metro 3 corridor, cutting through the heart of the city. Nearby, residents of the three-storey Annapurna Niwas are vacating houses. Their structure is the next and last on the list of 30 buildings making way for the Metro route along the crammed 50ft Jagannath Shanker Sheth (JSS) Road in the Girgaum-Kalbadevi belt.

The Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC), which is executing the project, has succeeded in convincing locals to surrender their almost century-old houses so that the corridor can pass through the underbelly of one of the city's oldest neighbourhoods. Kalbadevi and Girgaon stations will come up on this stretch. Perhaps, this is the government's biggest-ever rehabilitation project involving legal middle-class tenants for an urban infrastructure project.

The area is home to traditional middle-class Marathi and Gujarati families whose ancestors have been part of Maharashtra's and India's freedom struggles. It is here that Mumbai's iconic Ganeshotsav began. MMRC has taken over 10,000 sq m of this locality on which stood the 30 buildings that were home to 423 families and 289 commercial units. In lieu, the displaced will get in situ rehabilitation in three highrises—Kalbadevi Commercial Centre, Kalbadevi Heights and Girgaon Heights—latest by 2021 with flats that will double their existing areas. Meanwhile, MMRC is offering rent as per the locality's current market rate for families to move out of the area.

Residents like Uma Karekar and her retired husband don't think the rent is adequate. When TOI visited their one-room tenement in Annapurna Niwas, they were packing to leave for their son's house in Thane. "We are getting Rs 22,000 per month but the rents are higher. We have no

choice but to leave," said Karekar. Initially, MMRC had planned only monetary compensation or accommodation as per the Relief and Rehabilitation policy. The cost of rehabilitation then was Rs 91 crore and the MMRC was planning to acquire 29 plots. But the project ran into opposition.

R Ramanna, MMRC's executive director, said, "It was a complicated phase. We even thought of dropping these two stations from the corridor for the time being."

Recalling the stand-off, a resident said, "We are attached not only to our property but also to the area. It has its unique culture and ethos. We were not willing to shift." The opposition subsided when MMRC announced there would be in situ rehabilitation. The new buildings will be equipped with modern amenities, parking, a terrace garden and will be integrated with the stations below—a huge upgrade from the earlier crumbling structures.

MMRC's chief of relief and rehabilitation Maya Patole said, "Moreover, CM Devendra Fadnavis announced that each tenant will get double the existing area, it was a game changer and left no scope for opposition." The list of plots to be acquired was pared to 20 but the cost of rehabilitation soared to Rs 700 crore.

"We were transparent with our dealings with the tenants. We heard their problems and involved them in the planning stage when the consultant was finalising the drawings for the highrises. It worked out so good that residents whose buildings were not affected approached us to take up redevelopment of their properties. We had to tell them we could not do so," says Patole.

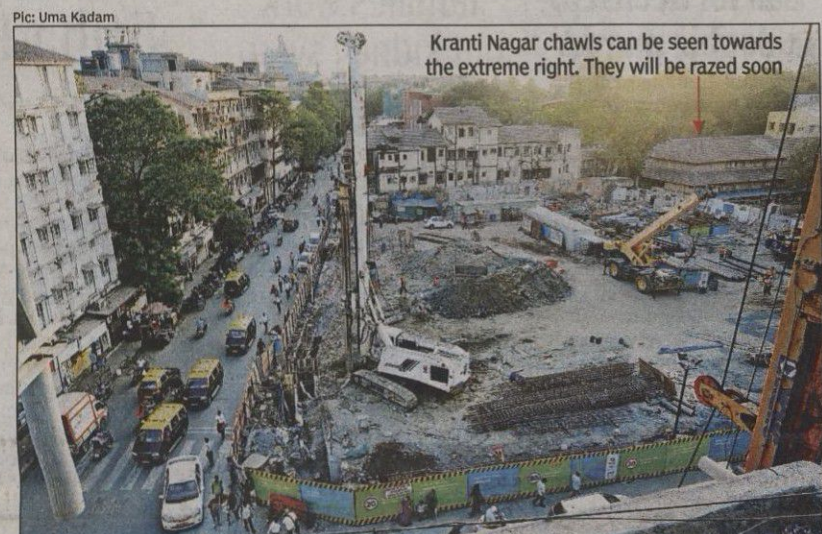
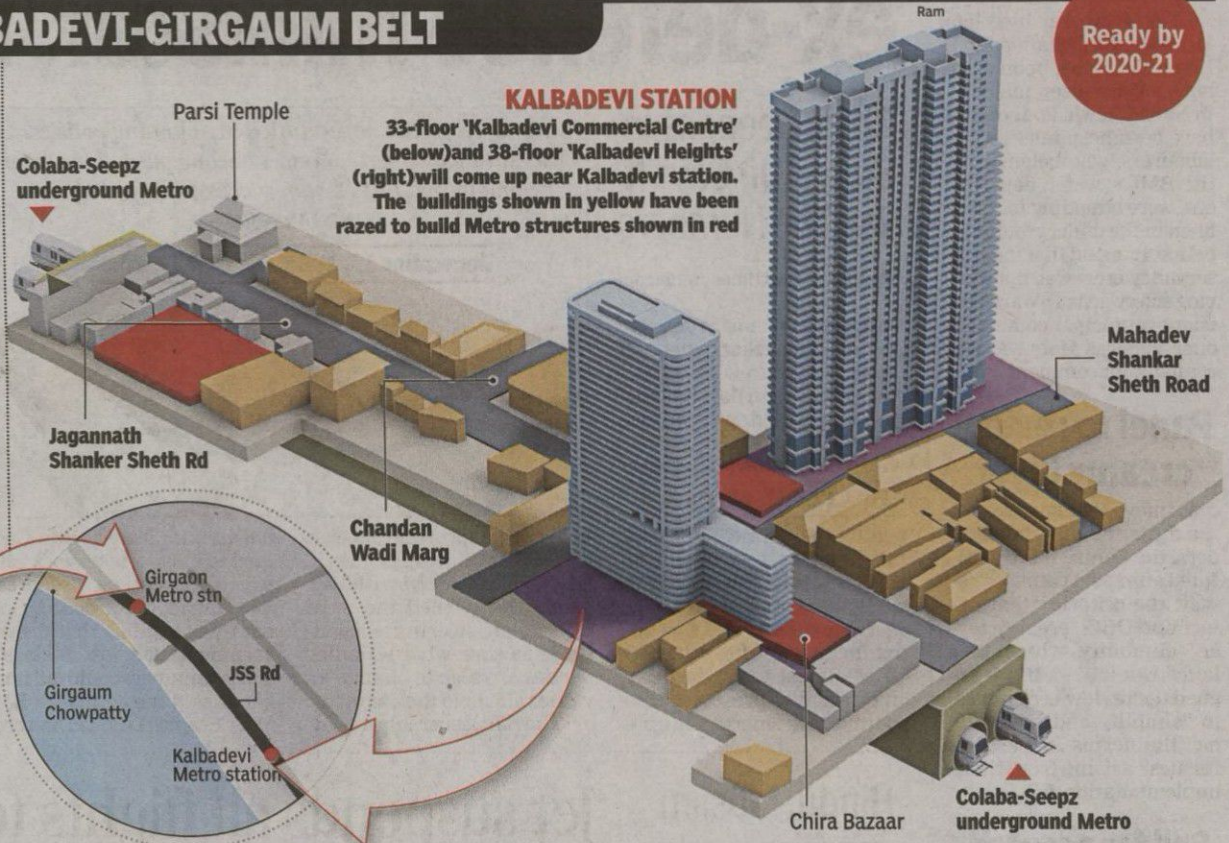
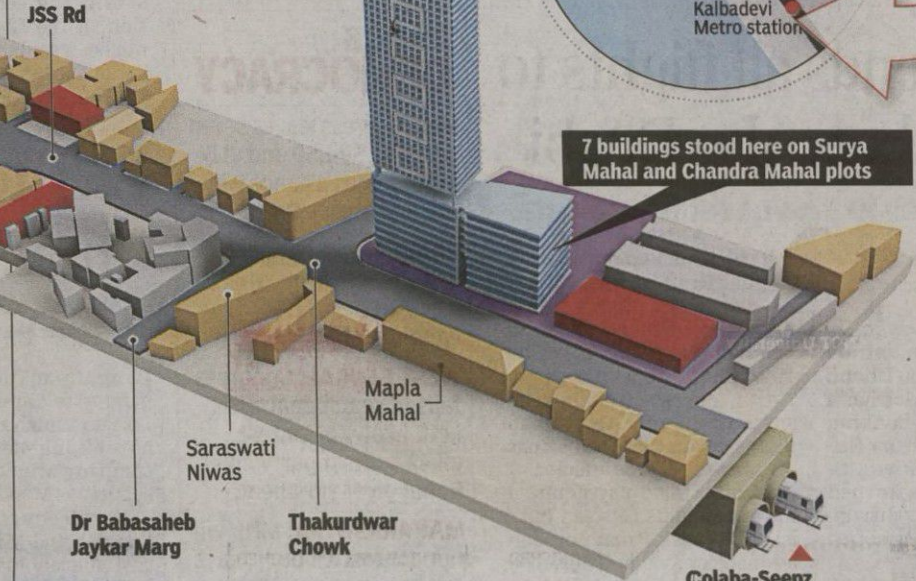
On the site, work is on in full swing for the two stations. Buildings are being razed within days of residents vacating them and machines are constantly at work flattening the ground surface, leaving no signs of what might have stood there once, not even rubble. MMRC claims that a work order for the three towers will be awarded in three months as tenders will be floated anytime soon.

But Karekar's neighbour Anuradha Vaidya has some other concerns, those that tug at her heart. "I have been living here for 50 years now. Our neighbours are like extended families. Though the rent is fine and we are happy that we will get bigger houses but will my neighbours be housed in the same building?" asks Vaidya.

REDEVELOPMENT IN KALBADEVI-GIRGAUM BELT

- Jagannath Shanker Sheth road, which starts from Metro Cinema and runs through Thakurdwar and Chira Bazaar, is one of the most congested areas of Mumbai. This belt houses very old residential and commercial buildings
- The Colaba-Seepz Metro 3 will run under this road and will have Kalbadevi and Girgaon stations here
- For this, 30 buildings with 712 units, including 423 residential, are being razed. MMRCCL says most of these bldgs were due for redevelopment
- and many societies had either initiated or were considering redevelopment
- The land of the affected properties will be used for construction of underground stations, ancillary structures, ventilation shafts, entry/exit and other activities
- Project-affected families have been offered in situ rehabilitation in three towers (see graphic). The redevelopment is being carried out simultaneously
- The Metro & the towers will be ready by 2021

GIRGAON STATION
 'Girgaon Heights', a more than 50-floor highrise, will rehabilitate those displaced from structures shown in yellow. In red are the Metro structures being built



Cumulative area deconstructed 9,936 sq m

423 Residential units

289 Commercial units

Total 712

“Our neighbours have stood by us in bad times and smiled with us in happier times. It was just a matter of one phone call and the entire floor would come to help. It would be nice if we can get houses together again —Sunita Haryan | A RESIDENT OF KRANTI NAGAR CHAWL THAT HAS BEEN VACATED

THE REHABILITATION BENEFITS

CURRENT AREA	REHAB FLAT AREA
Up to 202.5 sq ft	405 sq ft
202.5 sq ft to 300 sq ft	405 to 600 sq ft
300 sq ft to 444.44 sq ft	600 sq ft
Above 444.44 sq feet	Existing area + 35%

HOW WILL PEOPLE BE REHABILITATED

6 non-contiguous blocks—K1, K2, K3 in Kalbadevi and G1, G2, G3 in Girgaum—have been formed on the 10,000 sq m land occupied by MMRC for the project

COMMERCIAL UNITS | 20% over existing area

