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NMMC seals 23 properties to recover property tax

The Mumbai civic administration, in a bid to boost property tax recovery, sealed properties on Tuesday, which have failed to pay the taxes repeatedly. Accordingly, 23 properties, owing property tax to the tune of 60.94 crore, were seized across the city.

In a meeting called on Monday, ward officers were instructed to commence sealing of properties owing over Rs 1 crore as tax. This is the first time that the process was initiated simultaneously by all the ward offices. Of the Rs 595 crore to be recovered for the current fiscal, the property tax department has reportedly recovered almost Rs 475 crore. The action comes after property tax department served notices to 830 defaulters, asking them to pay up by December 31, 2016.

“There are many property owners, who have been consistent defaulters. Reminders and 48-hour notices were issued but they failed to comply,” said additional municipal commissioner Ankush Chavan.

Majority of the attached properties are commercial in nature, with most coming in MIDC region. Maximum attachments (4 each) were in Koparkhairane, Turbhe and Digha wards, followed by Belapur and Ghansoli (3 each). Similar action will be taken against defaulters under residential category too, said officials.

Meanwhile, the Small Scale Entrepreneurs’ Association (SSEA) will seek Supreme Court’s intervention. “NMMC demand for property tax from MIDC region has already been challenged by the Association and two stays are in place by the Supreme Court. NMMC was asked not to take coercive action. Property sealing in MIDC area is a violation and will be brought to the court’s notice,” said the joint secretary, SSEA, Raja Bhujle. The process of attaching property will continue, said civic officials.

How drones will solve land disputes in NCR district

Two dozen satellites, a specially modified short range drone and a team of experts has for the first time created a digital map of the district.

The idea started with one of the several property disputes that the national capital’s neighbouring district of Gurgaon has got used to by now. Two of India’s prominent real estate developers were locked in battle over a sliver of land – one coming up with a commercial project and the other building a new set of residential apartments.

What should have been a fairly easy matter to resolve was complicated by the fact that despite several attempts to demarcate the two plots, government officials with available tools could not accurately locate a seasonal rivulet at the centre of the problem.

For a country where land is at premium and often in the middle of business and personal feuds, India has an antiquated method of measuring and recording it - depending largely on painstaking ground surveys and decades old maps in which errors have amplified by both commission and omission.

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A new initiative that has won this year's National eGovernance award hopes to reverse this, creating what are perhaps the most accurate maps in Asia that can be used to verify land holding, demarcate boundaries and help resolve land disputes pending in Gurgaon.

Two dozen satellites, a specially modified short range drone and a team of experts that has been at work for over two years has for the first time created a digital map of the district, with geo referencing at land holding levels that has helped identify errors that crept into official land department records over the years.

"We found that in the Manesar Tehsil for instance, errors had crept in between 1957 and 2016. These errors were measured at 7.39% and have been brought down to just 0.1%," Gurgaon Deputy Commissioner T L Satyaprakash told ET.

While giving these digital maps legal validity is the next big challenge, this is the first time that digital rights of records (jamabandis) with land holdings verified conclusively can be generated. "The resolution of these maps make them the most accurate ever used in Asia for land record management purposes.

The resolution of 5 cm generated with the help of a special drone is a big improvement over the 20 cm resolution that has been used in a Singapore project," Satyaprakash says. This new age tool will assist the administration on its most difficult duties – checking on encroachments, collecting property tax, urban planning and conclusively resolving the thousands of land disputes that have burdened the legal system. Officials estimate that cost for the pilot project in Gurgaon is just slightly over `50 lakh.

The plan is to progressively connect several government databases to this digital map - a linkage to AADHAR numbers for example can generate land parcel IDs that can be used to instantly verify land sale and purchase transactions. The end product could be a public website that can be a one stop shop before any land transaction.

If implemented throughout the state of Haryana, the project has the potential of attracting industry as well which can access the digital database to plan a production hub with adequate available land, transport links, resources and expansion potential.

A lot of work however is still pending to draw up a comprehensive database, including gathering more accurate aerial imagery. The drone that was being used to map the district for example, could not get accurate readings of urban Gurgaon – magnetic interference led to it crashing thrice, bringing up costs. India may for the first time have a clear, dispute free platform to generate land titles, what remains to be seen is if this is taken ahead.

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