Kathputli Colony is a colony of street performers in Shadipur Depot area of Delhi. For the last 40 years, it is home to some 2,800 families of magicians, snake charmers, acrobats, singers, dancers, actors, traditional healers and musicians and especially puppeteers or kathputli-performers from Rajasthan. This makes it world’s largest community of street performers.

The colony is undergoing an in situ redevelopment plan by Delhi Development Authority (DDA) of Government of Delhi.
In the early 1970s, a handful of itinerant performers from Rajasthan settled in West Delhi’s Shadipur region. Such artists—primarily puppeteers and musicians—often migrated through the capital, and Shadipur made a convenient location for commuting to performances across the city. Over time, they were joined by a variety of artists from states like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, and together, they began to cohere into a single settlement known as Kathputli.

Over the next two decades, the settlement organized around its artistry, forming the Bhule Bhisre Kalakar Cooperative. With the help of the Asian Heritage Foundation, Kathputli artists found work through the Sangeet Natak Academy, a performing arts council established by the Indian government in Delhi.

Around this time, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) began to push for slum resettlement. In 1986, they proposed the resettlement of Kathputli residents in the South Delhi region of Vasant Kunj. Around 1990, DDA Slum Wing architect Anil Lall drafted more detailed plans for upgradation, according to a duplex-style housing model. And in 1996, they drafted another proposal for resettlement in Mehrauli, also located in South Delhi. All of these proposals were rejected on the grounds that neither location was as centrally located as their current Shadipur settlement.

Finally, following an express inclination toward in-situ rehabilitation of JJ clusters in the Master Plan 2021, the DDA chose Kathputli as the site of its first such project.

**BRIEF HISTORY AND CONDITION OF KATHTUTLI COLONY**

- **Early 1970s**
  - Artists from Rajasthan settled in Shadipur
  - People from other states also migrated to this settlement

- **1982**
  - Kathputli colony gained international recognition
  - DDA began to push for slum resettlement

- **1986**
  - Proposed resettlement to Vasant Kunj

- **1990**
  - Anil Lall drafted more detailed plans for upgradation

  However, all these proposals were rejected

- **In Master Plan 2021**, following the in-situ rehabilitation for JJ clusters – Kathputli Colony, the first project.
CONDITION OF KATHPUTLI COLONY
DDA for the first time has launched the "In-Situ Slum Rehabilitation Scheme" to rehabilitate slum dwellers. Under the scheme, re-settlement will be done on the land occupied by JJ clusters with private partnership. The land will be sold through the tender process to a private partner for construction of multi-storey houses. The first tender was floated to rehabilitate Kathputli Colony which is one of Delhi’s largest slum clusters and was won in a competitive open tender process by a Delhi based developer, Raheja developers Ltd.

Under this scheme, the 2800 families of Kathputli shall be given a new lease of life by providing them the latest modern apartments with high-end amenities like attached Bath, Toilets & Kitchens, Tiled flooring, Advanced Fire Detection & Fire Sprinter Systems. Seismic Zone 5 compliant RCC structure designed and certified by IIT/ other reputed structure MEP consultants.

Till the time these structures are built on site the Kathputli colony residents shall be rehabilitated in a Transit Camp facility at Anand Parbat barely, 1.8 kms away from the Kathputli Colony. This shall be only for 2-3 years by which time the buildings shall be ready.

All this is being allotted to the Kathputli residents and the costs are borne by the private developer, who in lieu of this will get a small portion of site for a private development which he can sell in open market to recover the massive construction costs of 2800 apartments at Kathputli colony and another 2800 independent houses at Transit Camp.
2800 HOUSES

DETAIL OF EACH DWELLING: 30.5 SQM area

ROOM AREA: 9SQM
MULTIPURPOSE ROOM: 6.5SQM
BATH: 1.2 SQM
KITCHEN: 3.3 SQM

OTHER AMENITIES:

PRIMARY SCHOOL
SR. SEC. SCHOOL
MULTI PURPOSE HALL
BASTI VIKAS KENDRA
POLICE STATION
DAIRY
FAIR PRICE SHOP
SHISHU VATIKA
KEROSENE STORE

ELECTRICAL SUBSTATION
FIREFIGHTING
WATER TANKS
INTERNAL ROADS

“Possession of the site would not be granted till a provisional transit camp is built by the developer”
DDA REDEVELOPMENT CONTRACT WITH RAHEJA DEVELOPERS

2800 HOUSES

DETAIL OF EACH DWELLING: 30.5 SQM area

ROOM AREA: 9SQM
MULTIPURPOSE ROOM: 6.5SQM
BATH: 1.2 SQM
KITCHEN: 3.3 SQM
The aim is that it should require less maintenance, while achieving high standards of parameters such as a quality of life, physical environment, economic stability, socio-cultural values and urban sustainability.

The developer has to provide 2800 affordable units and in return he is given land by DDA to develop 130 high end residential units and 17000sq.m commercial area.
LOCATION:
Anand parbat was chosen as the spot for relocation in March 2011, around five kilometers from the original settlement.

The transit camp itself is situated on an empty DDA plot with a ring of settlements around it. It’s a diverse developmental terrain; almost every category of DDA settlement—authorized colony, unauthorized (now regularized) colony, recognized slum, and JJ cluster—is represented in the area. On the Ramjas Grounds landscape, the camp appears starkly out of place.

The Transit Camp is finally ready to rehabilitate all 2800 slum dwellers families of Kathputli Colony.

The camp has various facilities like:
Ultra modern pre fabricated structures
RO filtered drinking water
Wide roads
Electricity
Adequate number of toilet and bathing facilities
Community facilities
Street lighting
Greenery
STP
Performance & Display Areas

TRANSIT CAMP UNIT:
Ivory single story blocks made up of gypsum boards
One room, single fan, single electrical outlet
No provision of water inlets and sewage outlets
Portable toilets will be imported by DDA
Meanwhile, a group of residents from the colony, who are opposing the project, said they wanted plots in the area instead of flats. “On Tuesday, people from the DDA came to the colony and tried to issue tokens to people for relocating to Anand Parbat. This is despite the Lt-Governor’s order of not using forceful means. We are not in favour of shifting. We want the DDA to hand us plots instead,” one of the pradhans of the area said.

**REACTION OF THE KATHPUTLI COLONY DWELLERS**

Kathputli Colony families who shifted happy with transit camp

Sidhartha Roy

NEW DELHI: “I have never felt so good visiting Delhi before,” said 65-year-old Janardan Bhorkhade as he sat comfortably on a bed inside a tiny room at the transit camp in Anand Parbat. The camp has been set up for slum-dwellers relocated from the nearby Kathputli Colony for a redevelopment project.

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is redeveloping the slum in situ under a public-private partnership with Raheja Developers. The colony residents will stay at the transit camp for nearly two years, while multi-storied apartments will be built for them at the slum.

Bhorkhade, a resident of Amravati, Maharashtra, married off his daughter with the son of Kathputli Colony resident Niranjan Labre (64) a few years ago. Bhorkhade, however, absolutely abhorred the idea of visiting his son-in-law.

“I find Kathputli Colony very filthy. Also, for morning ablutions, I would have to visit the nearby railway tracks,” he said. As soon as Labre and his family decided to move to the transit camp, his son invited his father-in-law. “This place is so clean and planned. It feels like heaven,” Bhorkhade said.

The spacious and planned Anand Parbat transit camp, with its undulating but wide roads and small houses in neat rows, is slowly coming to life with more and more families from Kathputli Colony moving in. More than 40 families have shifted in the last few days. While most residents are still opposing the redevelopment project, those who have shifted can’t stop singing praises for their new abode.

“Even if DDA doesn’t give us the promised two-room flats, I will be more than happy living at the transit camp,” said Ramdas Ahawale, 48, another resident.

The camp has wide roads, clean toilets and bathrooms, an RO plant for potable water, a sewage treatment plant and round-the-clock security. The developer is providing free meals to the residents till they settle down in their new houses. Almost all the families that have shifted are Marathis from the colony’s Marathi camp. Kathputli Colony is unofficially divided into camps dominated by Rajasthaniias such as bhattis (puppeters) and kala.udans (magicians and animal trainers), Gujaratiis, Andhrailites etc. “Marathis like me are more employed as guards, peons, drivers etc. We have no problem in shifting base but that’s with their huge puppets and other paraphernalia are finding it difficult to live in these small rooms,” said Ashwale.

Those who shifted also faced stiff resistance from those opposing the project. “We were verbally abused by neighbours. It was thanks to police protection that we could shift,” said Raju Wankhede, 40, another resident. “It was, however, the best decision I could take to provide a better environment for my family,” he said.

1.5k Kathputli colony residents go to see LG

New Delhi: The residents of Kathputli colony on Wednesday protested outside Raj Niwas. Few of them later complained to Lt Governor Najeeb Jung accusing the DDA of going back on its words of “in situ rehabilitation”.

Around 1,500 people from the colony, a habitat of hundreds of artists, including puppets, folk singers and magicians, marched to the LG’s residence in the morning. A 15-member delegation later met Jung. “Jung has assured us of action within two days,” said one of the representatives after meeting LG.

“Over two years ago, we were evicted from our houses in the colony by DDA with a promise that we would be provided new flats within two years, but we have got nothing,” said 40-year-old Mohammad Imtiaz. Residents of the colony were made to shift to a transit camp in Anand Parbat over two years ago by the DDA. PTI