

**The Times of India    01.09.2009**

## **Municipality Hands Over Roses To Encroachers**

Mihir Ray, TNN 31 August 2009, 10:46pm IST

ROURKELA: Borrowing a leaf out of Gandhigiri, Rourkela municipality officials handed over roses encroachers of Main Road footpath before asking them to vacate the area. Municipal chairperson Rashmi Bala Mishra and vice chairperson R N Mishra were present during the occasion.

The novel eviction drive was appreciated by traders, who also expressed their "apology" for encroaching on the footpath.

Shop owners at the Main Road market on both the sides of the road have encroached on the footpath for displaying their products. This has been causing problems for pedestrians and for cleaning of the drain as well. Besides, the encroachers have been causing traffic snarls because the market is located on a very busy area of the Steel City.

The municipal corporation had been facing criticism from various quarters to sort out the problem.

The traditional approach of municipal officials of serving notice with an ultimatum in the past had not yielded results. While many of the previous councils have preferred to remain silent on the matter, the present council preferred to experiment with the Gandhigiri approach to evict the encroachers. "We thought of introducing this approach by offering roses to persons who have encroached on the footpath and requested them with folded hands to clear the footpath in public interest," the municipality vice chairman said.

"We are extremely happy that our approach was welcomed by traders, particularly from the younger generation. They immediately accepted their mistake and expressed apology for their act," Mishra said. "The objective of this move was to create awareness and now we are confident of clearing the encroachments. The process has already begun," he added.

"I was totally ashamed when the municipality authorities like chairperson Rashmi Bala Mishra and vice chairman R N Mishra along with other senior officials approached me with a rose to vacate the footpath. I had no words to defend myself, other than saying sorry," A Kuddus, a young shopkeeper, said. "I feel the traders have realized their mistake and this approach will prompt them to clear the footpath at the earliest," he added.