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NMC anti-encroachment squad stops short of main culprits

NAGPUR: The anti-encroachment drive of Nagpur Municipal Corporation on North Ambazari road on Tuesday has come under scanner for its tokenism after the squad seized a few soft toys and four push carts but stopped short of removing the bulk of encroachments on footpaths at the busy Rani Jhansi Square.

On Tuesday, an anti-encroachment squad led by NMC official Arun Pipurde reached the University Library Square. It first targeted a roadside vendor selling soft toys at the square and seized some of his ware. Later, they headed towards Rani Jhansi Square. On way, they seized four empty push carts but they stopped short of vendors doing brisk business outside Matru Seva Sangh. They remained untouched by the squad.

The drive that started at 2.30 pm was an eyewash. The vendors who ran away from the spot when the squad started its work were back on the street within no time. Pankaj (name changed), one of the street vendors selling garments on the streets for the past 12 years, said, "The authorities seized kiosks of a few vendors. But we are back running our business

again."

Pandurang Ghatole, a student, who travels daily on the road, said: "Accidents are on the rise here as the vendors block the pavement and autos are parked on the side of the street leading to traffic jams. Buses stop in the middle of the street and we become prone to accidents and injuries." Suresh Kunwane, a pedestrian who uses the road daily, said, "Pedestrians face a lot of difficulty because of these vendors but nothing can be done."

Though there is a traffic constable at the square almost all the time, city buses stop anywhere including in the middle of the street putting busy traffic on hold. The cops never act them either. There are a lot of pedestrians on the street everyday because of the bus stop and small accidents occur everyday, road-users said

Dilip Jamgade, executive engineer (NMC) and in-charge of anti-encroachment squad, refused to comment stating he was not present during the drive. Pipurde said: "It is not possible to take action against all illegal vendors in two-three hours, we seized a few push carts of vendors who were disturbing the commuters. We seized six-seven stalls from Sitabuldi area as well."

(Reporting by Nikunj Ohri)