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86-year-old 'safai kamgar' honoured

Alu Dewa had joined the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai

in 1946

Mumbai: Three generations of a 'safai kamgar' (conservation worker) family in south Mumbai are rendering their services to the city with a view to save their house from being taken away by Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM).

86-year-old Alu Dewa who was on Thursday felicitated by Mumbai Regional Congress Committee president Kripashankar Singh for her services for 35 years had tears rolling out of her eyes.

The award was given by the Clean India Pulire 2009 in association with MCGM, the Council of the EU Chambers of Commerce in India, the Italian Trade Commission & Italian Ministry of Economical Development.

The oldest living woman conservation worker who joined MCGM as 'safai kamgar' in 1946 and retired in 1981 stays with a family of nine persons in a small room at Sandhurst Road, South Mumbai, which is given by the civic body.

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"Today my grandson is working at the same level as my husband and son did. He is doing it mainly because we do not have that much money to purchase a house for ourselves. So with this we will at least have a house where we can stay," Dewa said.

Dewa who was felicitated with a shawl, a bouquet and a cash reward of Rs 10,000 said she would deposit the money in the bank. "I'm very happy with the honour that has been given to me. I'm a sweeper and such an award is a great thing for small people like us," an emotional Dewa said.

Dewa who has never attended any functions, feels that, receiving award in front of so many people means a lot to her and makes her feel special.

When asked whether taking up a job of cleaning the roads of Mumbai has made her small, she said, "I never regretted doing cleaning work. I liked cleaning the roads. As we keep our house clean and beautiful everyday we must clean the roads as well." Dewa's grandson who is working with MCGM as a cleaner draws a salary of Rs 7,000 per month, which according to Dewa is meagre for a family of nine members as compared with today's economic conditions.

"I started with a salary of Rs 65 which later got increased to Rs 300 per month during my retirement period. The salary that my grandson draws is not much as prices of all commodities have increased," Dewa said. -- PTI

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