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BMC asks for paid labour for disaster management

By OUR CORRESPONDENT

(Mumbai, May 4: The P-North ward of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has started pulling up its sleeves and starting work for the forthcoming monsoons. They have called for tenders for hiring 15 people per shift for the ward's disaster management cell.)

In all, 30 labourers will be hired on a contract basis for 24 hours. "They will stay put in the P-North (Malad) ward's disaster management cell which acts as a control room of the particular ward, during the monsoon season," said Mr M.M. Kshirsagar, assistant municipal commissioner of P-North ward, that has a population of close to eight lakhs in an area of 46.67 square kilometers. (According to the ward officer, there is no need for the volunteers to have any educational qualification, as their job will involve cleaning drains for four months starting from May 20 to September 30. In the P-North ward, there are storm water drains running for 157.2 km. "The only criteria for their appointment is that a person should be healthy," said Mr Kshirsagar. Another criteria is that the labourers should belong to the same ward so that during emergency they can report for duty immediately.)

But some officers in the BMC are skeptical. Speaking on condition of

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anonymity, a BMC official said, "If people are being hired for disaster management purpose, they should have at least basic training in handling emergency situations or else what is the use of hiring so many people? Even the existing conservancy staff can clean drains."

Mr Kshirsagar confirmed that the hired people would be as good as the conservancy staff that are on contract. "They will be paid Rs 127 plus taxes, from the first day of October onwards their services will not be required," said the assistant municipal commissioner.

After the 26/7 deluge, the BMC has been taking help of the volunteers from Anirudh Academy of Disaster Management. 15,000 trained volunteers from the academy have been assisting the BMC during the floods and in other emergency situations.