



PUSHED TO THE LIMIT: While fire brigade officials had a tough time controlling the fire, the police struggled to keep the crowd of onlookers at bay

RESTRICTIONS: Fire tenders battling the blaze from the roof of an adjacent structure as they were unable to get closer in the congested area

ANOTHER FIRE JOLTS MANISH MARKET

Shopkeepers allege the fire started at floor illegally leased out by BEST; the shopping hub had only reopened this July after it was gutted in the November 2011 blaze

NAVEEN NAIR
naveen.nair@mid-day.com

BUSINESS at Manish market was severely hit after a major fire gutted a couple of floors on November 26 last year and the shopping hub only re-opened in July this year.

Barely two months since shop owners and vendors got back into business, a major fire struck once again at around 4.30 pm yesterday on the first floor of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply & Transport (BEST) Palton road, sub-station. It took the fire brigade

over two hours to bring the blaze under control and no casualties were reported.

While shopkeepers and a senior fire official allege that the floor where the blaze began had been illegally leased out by BEST officials to some shopkeepers, BEST spokesperson

claims that it was actually an old office of the streetlights department that was vacant.

Manish market being a hub of wholesale dealers, is crowded all year round.

With the upcoming Ganeshotsav on September 19, the narrow alleys at the market

were all the more congested with shoppers.

Adding to the problem, was the narrow lanes that restricted fire tenders from getting closer to the blaze.

Officials from the police and fire departments had a tough task to get the blaze under control and manage the crowd that had gathered. Over 15 fire engines and 10 water tankers were pressed into service to douse the fire that had spread on the floor above the BEST sub-station.

While the blaze was doused by around 6.30 pm, the fire brigade continued with its cooling operation until late in the night.

A senior fire official said, "We have received information that the above floor had been

illegally leased out by BEST."

Manoj Varade, BEST spokesperson, said that there was no problem with the sub-station or the transformer.

"Our chief engineers and other officials are at the spot looking into the matter. More information can only be provided after a detailed report is released. The floor above the sub-station was actually an old office of the streetlights department. This office has been vacant for a long time now," Varade said.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer, PS Rahandale said, "We are still investigating the cause of the fire and the transformer in the sub-station was not affected by the blaze. The fire was on the top floor and the attic space of the sub-station."



DAUNTING TASK: Curious observers look on as smoke bellows from the attic above the floor, which houses the BEST sub-station. PICS/SHADAB KHAN



QUITE A CHALLENGE: The limited space and narrow lanes posed a challenging task for the fire brigade to get close enough to tackle the blaze