

By Sidharth Mishra



For the national Capital's civic edifice, Master Plan of course is the guiding document. It's to the credit of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the Urban Development Ministry (UDM) that they have without fail brought Master Plan Document (MPD) every two decades, which have been accepted by the government with some delays and changes here and there.

Going by the contents of the various Master Plans, one would have to concede that these are fine documents, products of diligent work of long years. However, these documents have found acceptance only in words and seldom in spirit.

If one were to recall the civic history of post-independence Delhi, name of much-admired administrator-statesman Jagmohan, who recently passed away at the advanced age of 93, would emerge as someone who was one of the biggest custodians of the Master Plan documents. Jagmohan had a long affair with Delhi starting from the desk of DDA, to being its commissioner, becoming the Vice Chairman and ex-officio chairman as the Lieutenant Governor of the national Capital and later heading the Urban Development Ministry in Vajpayee government, which oversees the implementation of the Master Plan.

For planned development of the national Capital, DDA was created in 1957. In due course, DDA developed and released the Master Plan for Delhi in 1962 'to ensure an organized and structured development.' The document essentially looked at the identification of new land that could be developed into residential properties and make self-contained colonies by providing ample commercial office and retail complexes as well.

In 1982, following the Asian Games and a boom in real estate sector, the 1962 document was revised to formulate the Master Plan 2001 and again revisited in 2007 to form the Delhi Master Plan 2021. And in 2021, we have the draft Master Plan 2041, which is being variously debated

in the newspaper columns.

The imprint of Jagmohan was there in all the previous documents. Despite his rightful claim to be a connoisseur of planned urban development, Jagmohan's ideas did not deliver to the national Capital a perfectly planned city. "No document was bad but they were all marred in their implementation," one remembers Jagmohan saying at a deliberation soon after the third Master Plan was released.

Implementation of the Master Plan needs participation of the municipal bodies and the Delhi Government. Both being elected beings; the objectives of the Master Plans have often been stained by the demands of voters during implementation. An unadulterated certificate of the failure of the Master Plan has been the unabated rise of the unauthorized colonies across the national Capital.

At the time of the drafting of the first Master Plan, Delhi had just 110 unauthorised colonies with around 221,000 people living in them. During the last count ahead of the 2020 elections, there existed 1,797 such localities, and not to forget that a large number of them have been authorised in the past, the previous instance being in 1993.

The courts in the past have objected to the rise of unauthorised colonies as unplanned urbanisation of the city adding to its environmental woes. The Supreme Court-appointed monitoring committee had submitted a report in July 2019 saying that regularisation of unauthorised colonies puts strain on the existing infrastructure.

In a recent interview, a former senior official of the DDA said in a newspaper interview that the last plan was violated to the effect 50 percent in the areas of North and South municipal corporations and close to 70 percent in East Delhi. The standard international rate of Master Plan violation is just about 25 percent.

So, one may now imagine how these documents have been mauled in the past. Given the scenario, MPD 2041 would again remain a document or a benchmark for violation to gain quick electoral returns consigning sage advice of urban planning to the dustbins.

Delhi Master Plan: Six-decades of Housing Woes

Written by Administrator

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