

By Sidharth Mishra



A building in the outer lying areas of Delhi witnessed a devastating fire, the number of the dead are still being counted. With this headline splashed across the newspapers was also a news about Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia writing to Home Minister Amit Shah to stop the bulldozers bringing down encroachments and illegal buildings.

In their competitive politics over bulldozers, there is a lesson from the Mundka fire for both the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led Delhi government and the BJP-controlled municipal corporations. The reports revealed that the several storied building which went up in flames did not have license either from the fire department or the municipal corporation but still it had functioning offices and warehouses jeopardizing lives of people.

And this is not the first instance of fire in the recent times. In December 2019, the Anaj Mandi blaze claimed 44 lives, making it the most severe fire incident in the national capital after the Uphar Cinema tragedy that had claimed 59 lives and left over 100 injured in June, 1997.

Just a few days after the Anaj Mandi blaze, another fire tragedy took place in Outer Delhi which claimed the lives of several people. A fire ripped through a three-storey residential-cum-commercial building in Kirari area, killing nine people, including three children. Even earlier this year, in March, seven people were killed in a fire that ravaged several shanties in Gokumpuri.

The city's population has today grown to about 25 million from 1.7 million in 1947. With economic distress prevailing in almost all the north Indian states over the past several decades, people kept migrating to the capital in search of livelihood. With the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the central government agency responsible for development of the metropolis, failing to rise to the challenge of providing hearth to the migrant population, the farmlands

Encroachments, illegal constructions turn Delhi into an inferno

Written by Administrator
Saturday, 21 May 2022 10:58

adjacent to villages were converted into housing colonies, albeit illegally; thus the rise of unauthorised colonies.

This unplanned expansion of Delhi got a further boost especially in the past decade as the Metro lines reached the farthest corners of the city adding much value to the real estate in these areas. Those specially to benefit were the urbanised villages like Mundka, who used the proximity to Metro lines to build commercial structures.

The building which caught fire in Mundka on Friday last was not very far from the Metro station. Since most of these urbanized villages still follow the old revenue norms and records, the construction in these areas largely go unmonitored by the regulatory bodies or they turn a blind eye for a consideration.

One of the biggest and recent spectacles of these unauthorized structures which the city saw was the 'leaning tower' in the Munirka village, outside the north gate of the Jawaharlal Nehru University in South Delhi. The six-storied building had tilted by one-and-half feet. The municipal officials had to evacuate all its residents and also from the neighbouring buildings before the structure was pulled down with a lot of effort as it stood in a maze of unauthorized structures.

In April 2018, the apex court had ordered an immediate stay on all construction in the unauthorised clusters as they were not in conformity with building bylaws, as none existed for them. The governments however ahead of the assembly polls in 2020 brought legislations which freed these constructions of any regulation.

The two governments – Delhi government and the Centre-controlled municipal bodies, would do better to take a lesson from the mayhem in Mundka and put their heads together to clean the city of unauthorised constructions, bulldozers or no bulldozers. So far the governments of all the hues have worked overtime to encourage the unauthorized constructing.

(The writer is Author and President, Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice)