

'Stop this abuse, don't change Master Plan'

Architect SUDHIR VOHRA argues problem is of implementation, not planning



THE ongoing controversy over the Supreme Court orders on polluting industries and the hullabaloo over the suggestion to

change the Master Plan (MPD 2001) is — as is typical and, perhaps by now, customary in our country — getting muddled.

More so because a whole lot of peripheral, tangential and irrelevant issues are being thrown up by our politicians, some intellectuals and "thinkers". The aim is just to confuse us simple mortals.

The first, and the only issue, is the Rule of Law. The Master Plan for Delhi, conceived 40 years ago, revised 20 years ago and now due for a new look, envisaged specific land uses in certain areas. Instead of implementing the Master Plan, various governments (actually all)

mutilated the intent and content of the Master Plan.

This is not about planning. The core issue is implementation. The city — rather, this urban slum — of Delhi has not been administered honestly. The executive arm of our democracy has not done its job. Instead, successive governments have looked the other way to allow illegal occupation of government-acquired lands, permitted industries to operate in areas they are not supposed to be in and allowed the "no-objection" Raj to flourish.

We do have examples, albeit few, of good civic administration: Jamshedpur — God bless the Tatas; and Chandigarh — not too bad and nearer home as well. There's no encroachment in next-door Qutub Enclave. And in Delhi, no one would dare to do anything improper in the Cantonment Board area because the defence forces maintain it.

So now that 48 per cent of Delhi's population lives in areas ei-

— even security guards), you have a situation where the honest municipal tax-paying Delhiite has to subsidise the law-breakers.

If, God forbid, the Master Plan were to be altered, it would undermine the principle that the Rule of Law must be upheld, in a manner very similar to the VDIS. Don't pay your taxes and give some amount when the next VDIS comes in. After all, they had one VDIS, so why not another? Maybe after a few years but it is sure to come again.

Similarly, don't follow the municipal land use regulations — in any case, you'll be "regularised" the next time they change the Mas-

OPINION

ter Plan. After all, they did change the Master Plan once, so why not again! A very simple signal to those who excel in "bending the law" to suit their needs. First bend the law and then, slowly, break it.

The concept of mixed land use is neither new, nor illogical. Jorbagh, Sunder Nagar, even Connaught Place are typical examples of shops-cum-residences. So are parts of the Walled City. Chandigarh has both shops-cum-offices (Madhya Marg) and shops-cum-residences. Every sector in Chandigarh has them. Mumbai, London, perhaps every city, has a planned mixed land use.

But industries need a separate zone everywhere because they cannot co-exist healthily with a living habitat. Which is why industrial areas are developed where they do not pollute the human habitat.

The argument that now that

to do, there is a lot to be done. Industries have a space earmarked for them in many pockets in the National Capital Region (NCR), around Delhi's periphery. There are roads to be built. Mass Rapid Transportation Systems have to be

'Any change in Master Plan shall give rise to more corruption and misuse.'

more than "this much" per cent is already industrialised, let us "regularise it" — i.e change the Master Plan — shall only give rise to another round of corruption and more misuse.

How many industries were licensed after 1996? Where will they go? It shall take 'x' years to develop. My Lordship, we need more time to develop the industrial estates. Bawana residents won't like them next to their villages. All these are peripheral issues, irrelevant to the main and only real issue: That of the Rule of Law.

Union Urban Development Minister Jagmohan represents the executive arm of our democracy. His job is to implement, not to condone law-breakers. That right (to condone/pardon or not) rests with the judiciary — the Supreme Court. And that is just what the Hon'ble judges are doing.

And if the executive arm of our democracy does its job, as it is paid

in place so that people can travel safely and quickly to work.

Jagmohan is just doing his job. His job is to implement the law — in letter and in spirit. And if he wants to do it right, there is a lot to be done still. Plan out the NCR. Build the infrastructure needed to put up industries — telecom systems, power supply systems, effluent treatment plants, waste recycling facilities, roads, inland waterways, drinking water supply systems etc.

De-congest Delhi. Develop the surrounding towns. Remove the "magnet effect" of Delhi and reduce migration to it. As a result you reduce slums, non-conforming industries and resettlement colonies. Improve hygiene and the environment. A lot to be done.

(Sudhir Vohra is a prominent architect of Delhi who has often been quite vocal on issues concerning the future of our city.)

allowed the city to be encroached upon and occupied by illegal immigrants. They allowed misuse of residential and industrial areas and

ther called "regularised colonies" or in places like the Republic of Sainik Farms (you see, they have their own infrastructure, roads etc